

Interview with Hortense Terhaar

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Interviewed by Nancy Baker

Baker: The following is an interview with Hortense Terhaar from Cold Spring, Minnesota, a World War II veteran. Okay, we'll get started with just, you tell me where you born or education?

Terhaar: You don't want the year or stuff like that.

Baker: Well, it's up to you.

Terhaar: Okay. I mean, after all, I was in World War II, so that would put me somewhere. I was born in Avon, Minnesota, October 14, 1915. I left Avon at about two years of age. Went to Holdingford then and I went to school there at Holdingford Grade School until I was in the seventh grade—well, beginning of the seventh. And I enjoyed school very, very much. Then, I went to Genola, Minnesota, which is near Pierz, Minnesota. And we were there one year. And it was a different type of school completely. It was the first Catholic school I had been into, and it was so completely different. And it was a little hard to adjust when we were only there for one year. And then we came to St. Cloud. Then, I went to school again, to Catholic school. And then I was graduated from eighth grade at St. Mary's in St. Cloud—St. Mary's Cathedral. And then high school at Cathedral High School, four years there. And then I was out two years because I couldn't—it was the Depression, I wouldn't have money. And so, in order to go on—we had ten children in our family and my dad was out of work three years with ten children, and it was very

difficult. And so, I knew I had to earn money. No matter what I earned, I didn't have any fun, but just tried to save money. Oh, Lord, I took two years to do that. And then I went to St. Cloud Hospital and applied myself and was accepted. And then I graduated from there in '38.

Baker: From the School of Nursing there?

Terhaar: Yes.

Baker: Okay.

Terhaar: And then I was working for the St. Cloud Hospital. Head nurse in ears, eyes, nose, and throat. I was new, and then the war came along. I had applied at the VA, but then also the war came along. And then, I wanted to do a little private duty. I did three months of private duty to give me some more additional experience, although I was head nurse at the St. Cloud Hospital. So, I did three months of private duty. Then, I had to report to Great Lakes through the Red Cross.

Baker: Okay. So, the Red Cross recruited?

Terhaar: Recruited.

Baker: Okay.

Terhaar: It was a recruitment system.

Baker: Okay. So, if you didn't want to go, you didn't have to?

Terhaar: No.

Baker: Okay.

Terhaar: You were not drafted. It was just volunteer. But they were very much—they needed it. And I thought well, it was one way of getting around. And it was quite dull because everybody was in the service. I mean, what could you do? There was just a bunch of women around. But anyway, then I went to Great Lakes. Had my physical there. And then, I got my first assignment at Norman, Oklahoma, which is the Navy at Norman. But it was a primary air station and a big new hospital. Never had nurses there before, never. It was about a 2,000 bed hospital. And they got all these bad cases that were flown in from these islands. They were bad, you know.

Baker: Okay. So, they accepted wounded soldiers from the South Pacific?

Terhaar: They flew them in from the South Pacific.

Baker: Flew them in, okay.

Terhaar: And then it was primary air station, where they became pilots at the primary station. And it was a great, big divided base. One was a hospital, and one was a primary station. And we were the first nurses, so Oklahoma City gave us a great big sendoff because they wanted to entertain the nurses because they were the first nurses there. We had beautiful rooms and beautiful equipment. And everyone had private rooms. Lovely new furniture. Everything matched in every direction from maple to mahogany. It was beautiful, and I never had such a setup. Anyway, I liked the Navy right away. [Baker laughs] And beautiful dining room. And beautiful everything. We had a whole table of Minnesota nurses. I never knew any of them before.

Baker: Was this like a big apartment where you lived?

Terhaar: A great big house. It was built for us.

Baker: Oh, it was specially built.

Terhaar: We were the first nurses there, and the first everything.

Baker: Wow, okay.

Terhaar: And it was like a great big H and different wings were that way, and everything was on one floor with a great big dining room. Maid service and everything was there. So, we were officers. And then we had to have a little drill with a Marine sergeant drilled us because there were times when we'd have to parade in cities and we had to know a little bit about following orders. Boy, were we terrible!

Baker: [laughs] I was going to ask you if you have any type of basic training or anything.

Terhaar: No. We had to get six or eight weeks of Navy terminology because you had to learn the bulkhead, the deck and we had to learn all that terminology. And all your charting was done on the 0800.

Baker: Right, military time.

Terhaar: Everything was that way. And so, the bulkhead and the head, the bathroom was the head, the bulkhead a wall. And we also had to—this drill sergeant—we'd go so bad that we'd go north and south at the same time. [Baker laughs] We were just terrible. Really. He'd scratch his head and just go--

Baker: And this was a Marine that was--

Terhaar: It was a Marine sergeant.

Baker: Oh, what a nightmare.

Terhaar: And outside the nurses quarters we did that and we'd just go, I don't know how many hours. We'd go, "Oh, for goodness sakes." You know, this was not up our alley. But at any rate, that lasted just so long, and we were through with that. But he said he never had such a group. At any rate, then we were there and we had a variety of duties from ward management, the nurses were always in charge of a ward. Maybe she had eight to ten corpsmen under her that she would have to teach and direct and guide. The nurse is really a supervisor in the Navy. So, that was an experience for some nurses. Of course, I had been a head nurse, so that wasn't so hard. But some nurses found that very difficult. And then, we even had department heads, OB even and GYN and stuff like that. And children, pediatrics. We had everything in this great big hospital. These were dependents.

Baker: Right. So, this hospital took care of--

Terhaar: Men and women.

Baker: Okay, and also the wounded. So, it was quite large.

Terhaar: Yes. And WAVES. We had lots of WAVES. And they were very seriously ill, some of them were really. And these kamikazes that would burn, you know, try to go on a ship to burn the ship—go into a ship and burn up themselves. We had those cases where they tried to burn the men up.

Baker: So, a lot of burn cases.

Terhaar: A lot of serious cases. And of course, a primary air station, a lot of airplane accidents. And then, I was given an assignment also to be a dietician, I was never. They don't hire dieticians in the Navy. The Navy nurses who have had—well, the most we had at the hospital

was six weeks of dietetics. They make you a full-fledged dietician. That was some assignment. I had one nurse under me and about eight corpsmen. And I had two civilian helpers, and I had to direct a whole, you know, big hospital of 2,000 beds. You have every kind of a diet there is.

Baker: No kidding. Now, did they train you at all for this position or not?

Terhaar: Just what I had.

Baker: Just what you knew, and the books.

Terhaar: They give you a bundle of books about like this. And I got wards where all there was a telephone on the floor. See, we were so new. And you'd have to order everything from a supply house. The books were just immense from the supply house. And every single syringe, everything, every bed, everything that you had in that place—except the telephone on the floor—every desk, every chair. Everything had to be ordered by you. Thousands of dollars' worth of stuff are ordered, and in two days you had a going ward with all the corpsmen going. It was from nothing to going concern with patients in there. And that was a lot of responsibility for the average person to go in there. And even from a general hospital, to get that thrown at you. It's quite a big change. But, it was interesting. Never a dull moment. In fact, you get a little geared to this extensive fast pace. You had to come down again.

Baker: Sure. Did everyone get along quite well, like the officers with the enlisted people?

Terhaar: I would say it was a—well, I'm usually well-organized. I'm usually well-disciplined, and we were told of course as Navy nurses we were not to go out with enlisted men. That was just such a taboo because you're an officer and you can't go out with enlisted men. Some of the girls did and one of them got married and that day it ripped right in front of everybody. She had

her emblems with your bars, she had everything ripped from her sleeves and they told her to get out. She was put out, and that day she was out of the Navy. Isn't that terrible?

Baker: You had to pool around, then.

Terhaar: But, the responsibilities were great, but very nice. And we'd have lovely parties. That's one thing they did do. They had marvelous entertainment for everybody. There was recreation for us, planned organization. The bachelor officers' quarters were near us, and there were so many snakes there. We'd see these great big snakes and then we'd holler and scream and, they'd come over with axes and chop them. It was a terrible experience. Always the nurses screaming and hollering. But, you'd see them come out of the ground, and Oklahoma has lots of snakes.

Baker: Yes, I've heard that. I have.

Terhaar: And they had peach orchards. The whole thing was built in an old peach orchard. And so, the red soil was just terrible with the wind. You'd get to work in the morning and all the white bedspreads that were all there were just all red. You'd have to go like this, and they would just.... But you know, the old peach orchard, with all the red and the dust, just terrific.

Baker: Was it real hot there, how hot?

Terhaar: Very hot during the summer.

Baker: Okay.

Terhaar: If you had night duty, I know how hard it was to sleep during the day. And we were all on one floor. But, it was so hot that you'd sleep—I had two windows like this, one here and one there, and I'd sleep on the bottom of the bed and with as little as I possibly could have on. And

then I'd just be wet. My figure was just all wet right on the mattress. It was that warm and sticky. It wasn't very comfortable.

Baker: No. It sounds like it was a pretty good place to be, though. I mean it sounds very nice.

Terhaar: It was very nice. I would say I was impressed with it, really. I never had anything that nice to live in as long as I had lived. I had never had anything that really attractive. I guess I was kind of lucky, it was my first duty, and as far as living in the Navy it was the best.

Baker: Sure.

Terhaar: And so, then I got other duty. I was there about a year and five months, and I got orders all alone. Many of my friends got orders with other nurses. They gave me orders all alone. And I got orders to Seattle, Washington Naval Air Station. Didn't know what that was going to be. Went on a train.

Baker: Now, this was when? What year was this about? Well, you said you were in Oklahoma for about a what, about a year?

Terhaar: About a year. I went in in '43, January 5, '43 that I was in my first duty. I was sworn in a little earlier than that for my physical and stuff. So, I was there about a year or so '43, '44, '45 maybe.

Baker: Okay. Went to Seattle.

Terhaar: I went to Seattle, Washington Naval Air Station, Sand Point. And that was a dispensary, a Naval dispensary with about five nurses we had. Entirely different service. And we had a wonderful dispensary, about four dentists, about six or eight doctors and we had hangars. I would get duty about every three or four weeks down where they fixed airplanes and shot-up

airplanes that were fixed up. And then, you'd work with a doctor who was a specialist in that kind of surgery and that kind of work where the people would be hurt. In that kind of thing, they could be hurt with anything. I'd be at a station where they had about four beds, and that was a station that I'd have to go through a hangar and I'd have to know the password everyday coming in and going. And if I didn't know it I'd have to get it from the sergeant, or they wouldn't let me out or let me in. You had to know. And the guy would come around, shore patrol, tell it to you in the afternoon and you had to keep a hold of that. And every day, it was a different password.

Baker: Do you remember any of them?

Terhaar: Sometimes I forgot them because they were so bizarre.

Baker: I was wondering if you remembered what some of them were.

Terhaar: Oh, bulldog or mountain or meow or anything bizarre. But this is what you had to say.

Baker: Okay, but these people, now, that were there that were injured, they were injured while they were working?

Terhaar: While they were working.

Baker: Okay.

Terhaar: And then, they would come into the place where I was, and if it was something I could do—if it wasn't serious I could patch them up. We had all kinds of equipment. But if it was serious, I had to call the specialist. And we made rounds every day in the morning about 9:00. And I would be there for eight hours until my password come, and I'd go off duty and have to be able to say it. And it was interesting work, very interesting. Monday mornings, of course. They were all ages, those workers, coming from all over the United States.

Baker: And they worked on planes.

Terhaar: They repaired planes. And they could be from—one was ninety years old, a man. And they were men, women, all ages, all descriptions. Some from Arkansas, Tennessee, Alabama.

Baker: And these were just civilian people that were working?

Terhaar: Yes.

Baker: Okay.

Terhaar: And these were civilians, and I worked with them. And there was a canteen there too. I could eat my meals down there. They would come in for food. But on Monday mornings, I knew I was just always Monday mornings—because they would come in, they would get so plastered over the weekend that Monday morning they were. I had all the beds full, you know. They came, they were sick, they had to sleep off—and all the headache tablets I gave them.

Baker: So, what they did then was work on government planes, on military planes?

Terhaar: Yes.

Baker: Okay.

Terhaar: They were big hangars. And if there was an accident that was severe, I'd have to go out to the hangar. And then, if they were really injured bad, I'd have to get an ambulance.

Baker: Okay. How about your living conditions compared with Oklahoma?

Terhaar: Oh, that was quite different, quite different. We got checkbooks there. There, we ate in a great big dining room with everything—Minnesota table and all this business. And beautiful

silver, lovely service. And there, it was a lovely place. It was called BOQ--Bachelors Officers Quarters, and it was a great big dining room. And we had other areas where the bachelors lived. Then, they had an area where there were dances, and downstairs a bar. It was just like a great big hotel with a dining room that you went to eat breakfast, dinner, and supper there. That was where we ate. And then we lived up on a hill, real high, and all the WAVE officers and nurses lived in this. Five nurses, and I think there must have been at least—oh, and the Red Cross workers. And there were about five WAVE officers there and I think about five nurses. A lovely place to read, like a parlor. And two in a room there, two nurses in a room, which wasn't as nice as some of mine. It was temporary housing, I suppose you might say, barracks that were put up real fast. And there was one thing I liked about it. They had a lovely little place with a refrigerator and a kitchen and we could make our own, like if we didn't want to go to the dining room. They had it stocked full of things that you could make almost any kind of a lunch for yourself, if you wanted to. You didn't have to go down there. And sometimes if you were on night duty, it was nice to get up and go in your robe and get something.

Baker: Sure. Was the food good?

Terhaar: I would say it was. It was during war when there was rationing, and we had everything you could dream up that was rationed otherwise, we got. I don't care what it was, we had it. Excellent food, excellent.

Baker: Okay. So, that was a pretty good experience for you then?

Terhaar: It was good. I think that dispensary work was entirely different because you had these people getting hurt too. Airplanes would land on Naval Air Stations, you know. We had accidents that were terrific. Well, of course, usually they were dead when they came in the

ambulance. They came in, they were finished. But they'd come in fast, they were bad. But I didn't go to look at them they were on that. But I had talked to some of them the day before and some of those were the very ones that cracked up the next day. It was terrible. I'd see them one day, and not the next in the BOQ, you know.

Baker: Well, what would happen when they were working on these planes?

Terhaar: Well, they'd go into the mountains, near Seattle. There are a lot of big mountains. And some of those planes would crash into the mountains.

Baker: Okay. These were pilots, Navy pilots?

Terhaar: Yes. And were going, often flying to Alaska from there. That's a drop off point to Alaska.

Baker: Okay. I see.

Terhaar: Naval Air Station, you get your big station. Also, flying down to San Francisco and Seattle and San Diego. But their biggest route was up to Alaska. As a Navy nurse, anytime, that's why I had my Navy 232051, I had my numbers. You get numbers in the Navy, your service number. And you could call the hangars anytime you had a day off, or several days off or a weekend, and call the hangars down there at the air station and if there was room you could fly anywhere for nothing as a Navy nurse. I went to San Francisco. It was nice. They weren't fancy, they had bucket seats and you got strapped in. It wasn't fancy, but that's the way they transported you. Our sailors and Marines were transported that way. If we wanted to travel that way and there was space, we could. That was nice.

Baker: Okay. So, than these civilians that worked on the planes, there was accidents with them also?

Terhaar: Right. They were hurt working. That is very dangerous work. Lots of equipment that is very dangerous.

Baker: Okay. That's what I wasn't quite clear on. So then, you were in Seattle for, was that your last?

Terhaar: No.

Baker: No, then you were went somewhere else.

Terhaar: Then I was sent to Oceanside, California, Camp Pendleton with the Marines, a big, big Marine station in Oceanside. From Oceanside, it went in twelve miles. Then there was a great big hospital called Santa Margarita, Santa Margarita Ranch. That's a huge hospital. And that's right in the middle of this great big Camp Pendleton.

Baker: Okay. That's a Marine facility. Okay.

Terhaar: But we took care of sailors, too. And if the Air Force came around and there was no one else, we took care of them. We took care of them all.

Baker: Sure. What were your duties there, similar?

Terhaar: Big hospital and again I was on night duty and ran surgical wards and medical wards, some officers' quarters again, and BOQ, sick officers' quarters. And what else did I do there?

Baker: It's kind of hard to remember everything.

Terhaar: One day I got orders to go to run the surgical central supply, which I had never done. I mean, again, when they told me I had to be a dietician that was just a killing for me because I had never done it. To run surgical supply, I mean that's big—autoclaving and be responsible for everything, sterilizing and all that, and corpsmen under me and another nurse under me. And I thought; "I'd never done that before." I had to do some more reading again. I thought I did so much reading for the dietetics, here I go again. And you have to do exactly what you're told. You can't say you can't do it.

Baker: Sure, and I suppose they have a specific procedure how you do it, how you do everything.

Terhaar: Just like the OB work. We didn't have people to give anesthesia in OB work. We had to run those machines. I never ran a machine in my life. But the doctor was there to help me, see. The doctor would say, "Push this, push that, do this, do that." But it's a lot of responsibility. Get the IV's into the vein. All this was responsibility that I didn't have at the St. Cloud Hospital. That was hard on me.

Baker: How about living conditions there?

Terhaar: We had two in a room there, and it was a barracks with two great big floors. And our beds were all made of logs. The whole bed was made of these, I suppose some kind of light colored, rustic looking logs, the headboard and everything. The whole style of the whole building in our parlors and everything downstairs, was all in a ranch style. But it was two floors like the barracks, except that they decorated it like that. Great big dining rooms and all your meals were more or less—I mean, you served yourself on a tray through a line. It was little more casual, you know. Again, you had to do it. And two in a room, which I only had one in a room in

that first duty I had. That was superb for living conditions. But this was a little crowded. And it was a big hospital. Lots of nurses.

Baker: How many beds were in this hospital? Did you know more?

Terhaar: Oh, around 2,500.

Baker: Oh, so a little more than the Oklahoma.

Terhaar: And of course, being on the coast you got all those—and the big Marines, lots of Marines. And I was on surgical call there. I never had been on surgical call in my life. But while I was in the surgical supply, then they said, “When you’re here, you got to take call at least once or twice a week.” And that meant supervising surgical emergencies: an appendectomy, a gallbladder, this or that, or an accident downtown in Oceanside or somewhere, everything that came. I thought, “Oh, now I have to read up again.”

Baker: [laughs] How about, did you have combat cases coming in there at all from the war, like from the South Pacific any of the islands?

Terhaar: Yes. They came in there because that’s right on the coast.

Baker: That’s what I was wondering. Okay.

Terhaar: That is not the biggest military hospital, but it’s big. The biggest one I was also at, but that was for the Korean War. I got out then in ‘46.

Baker: Okay. So, this was your last stop before when you got out, Camp Pendleton?

Terhaar: Yes.

Baker: Okay. And did you kind of have plans? Were you anxious to get out by then?

Terhaar: Oh, yes.

Baker: I was wondering how long.

Terhaar: [laughs] I couldn't wait until my numbers were up. They had, you know, so long, so much time. I don't know how they figured it all out. But you got points. And when my points were up, I was so glad. Then, they hid my orders that came from Washington, because I had requested when my points were up that I would get out. They needed the nurses yet, so they hid those orders, which they were supposed to give out. The chief nurse said, "I don't know, I know your orders came, but no one can find them. They got lost in the shuffle." Well, I thought, I just knew there was something shady about that. But they kept my orders because they just wanted to keep me for a while longer. And at least almost a month, which hurts when you're on the end and wanting to get out.

Baker: Oh, I imagine.

Terhaar: It really hurt.

Baker: Was there a shortage of nurses, do you think?

Terhaar: I think so because they even took in nurses who were trained a very short while in hospitals. They called them cadet nurses. And they got their experiences. There was a shortage. They tried every which way to get them.

Baker: What was your ranking then? You were automatically made an officer.

Terhaar: I went in as an ensign, and then I got to be a lieutenant JG, then a full lieutenant, and when I ended I was up for lieutenant commander.

Baker: Okay. So, you left California then.

Terhaar: Then, I left Camp Pendleton and came back to Minnesota. Then, of course, I--

Baker: Did they put you in a reserve type thing?

Terhaar: I didn't know that I was because I didn't know my status was reserve. I thought, "That that's it, I'm through." You don't know these details. It never even occurred to me that I could be eligible to be called. And I had friends of mine that went into the active reserve, where every four weeks they went to Minneapolis and exercised and did all kinds of things and got paid for that. I didn't want anything to do with that.

Baker: Okay. But you were actually in the reserve and didn't know it and didn't get paid for anything?

Terhaar: No, I didn't know it. I didn't get paid or anything.

Baker: So then, you got out in '46, you said. And then you came back here. Did you work then?

Terhaar: Then I got out, and I didn't want to go back to my old job at St. Cloud Hospital. And I went to school as a—I thought I'm just going to go and get more schooling because I had the G.I. Bill. And I went to the University of Minnesota.

Baker: Okay. For nursing?

Terhaar: I went for public health.

Baker: Public health. Okay.

Terhaar: So, I thought that was getting something in addition, and I needed that transition. I needed to get away, and being a student was a good way to do it. And there were 40,000 going to school. Lots and lots of G.I.s. Lots of Navy nurses, also Army nurses. I met a lot of new people. Stayed in Comstock, you know. It was an experience going to the university with so many people.

Baker: Oh, I believe that.

Terhaar: It was an experience. Just to sign up for courses was an experience.

Baker: It still is. [laughs]

Terhaar: The line ups were terrible.

Baker: I think they should give you credits for figuring out your schedule like that. [laughs]

Terhaar: Well, it was just an experience just to go to the university. And I had been out of school for a long time.

Baker: Sure, to get back into the routine is another thing.

Terhaar: And learn to study again, you know.

Baker: It sounds like you learned a lot while you were in the service, in your particular case.

Terhaar: You're right.

Baker: So, I would guess you had a little jump on things there?

Terhaar: I took a lot of humanities, sociology, and psychology because I was terribly interested in psychology and psychiatric nursing, public health. And so, I could tell by the professors we had and all the students that we had and all the service people, and we sometimes knew more than the professors. You know, our experience.

Baker: Oh, sure. No doubt.

Terhaar: And you could tell just by the answers these kids gave. Sometimes they'd say, "I know what the right answers are, but you know what that dumb old professor wants." Then we'd have to get what the professor wanted in order to pass the course. They knew what, you know, the real thing was, but if you're going to get any kind of a grade, you better get what the professor wants.

Baker: What the professor wants.

Terhaar: It was ridiculous.

Baker: Okay. So, then you were in school. Did you finish that?

Terhaar: I went for one full year and two summer sessions and then I had it up to here. I was sick of it. But, it was good experience. And I thought, "I can't go through that." And I was through. I had enough time that I could have gotten a Ph.D. there. I had all this time. Three years, three months, and you got all that credit. You could go to school three years and three months.

Baker: Did they give you any credit at the university for your experience in the service?

Terhaar: I think I got around sixty-five credits for my nursing at the St. Cloud.

Baker: Oh, for your training at the hospital. Down at the U, did they give you any credit at all for your experience in the service?

Terhaar: No, except you could take the GED using all that you wanted and that gave you some extra credits. But as far as a blanket, no. And I took all my stripes off my uniforms and used those as suits because we just couldn't afford them. You just got some money, but you didn't get a lot of money, just enough to go to school. Couldn't buy a whole wardrobe again. So, I just made do. They were pretty good suits.

Baker: So, then, did you come back to St. Cloud here then after?

Terhaar: Because I had just applied at the Veterans Hospital from the St. Cloud Hospital when the war came up. I was accepted to have a physical there, but because of the war I went into the service instead. So, when I came back I said, "I'm going to reapply there." Now, besides that, I got credit. You know, they hire on points.

Baker: Right. Okay, so you got credit.

Terhaar: Because I was a nurse in World War II and after awhile it was the Korean War, and I got two credits for being in both of them. And then ultimately, I got credit for two, but then I was there at the VA when I was recalled for the Korean War.

Baker: How did that work, when they recalled you?

Terhaar: Well, I was working as the first supervisor there ever was at the VA Hospital when they put the beat on me that I had to come. I tried to get out of it, I have my letters that say "sorry" to the personnel. I telephoned, I wrote, I went through every which way you can try to get out of it. I did. And I still have that writing that says, "Sorry."

Baker: So, in other words, you were drafted for the Korean War then?

Terhaar: Oh, by all means. I used every channel I could to not go. Because I wanted my job. I had a new car. I never had a car before. I should give all this up? And so, I had my folks find a garage for my car. I had to go. It said on such and such a day. And they said, wear your uniform.

Baker: And you had ripped the stripes off. [laughs]

Terhaar: I had ripped the stripes off. I said, “Nothing doing.” I was so angry by this time.

Baker: Oh, I believe it.

Terhaar: I didn’t care what I would look like coming down there. And I wore a hat with the most feminine—I remember it had kind of pompoms on it. And I wore the most feminine dress and outfit and fur coat and everything when I went down there and I reported there. And I had not a uniform with stripes on. Not a white uniform with anything. They said, “Well, Miss Terhaar, you aren’t dressed as an officer?” I said, “Officer, my clothes are long gone. What do you think?” Well, it’s ridiculous. And I came to the chief, to Miss Bosco like that. I said, “This is all I have. If you want me, this is it.”

Baker: Now, where did you have to report?

Terhaar: To San Diego, to the Naval Hospital—U.S. Naval Hospital, San Diego, California. That’s the biggest military hospital.

Baker: Oh, it is. Okay.

Terhaar: Well-established. Big, big. They called it the Pink Palace.

Baker: Okay, so that’s where they sent you, to the hospital there.

Terhaar: Because they needed psychiatric nurses.

Baker: Okay, so then, you worked as a psych nurse down there.

Terhaar: I ran outpatient and inpatient and locked wards. I had terrific experience for all that, you see. That's why they wanted me. Washington said, "No, we have to have her experience." I saw that letter just lately, I looked at it. It was upstairs. I looked at it and reviewed it. There it is. I never even reviewed it because when they give you those reports, you don't look at everything when you come out. You're so glad to get out, who cares? I signed so many things. You know, in my sleep I could sign those sheets. You don't look at everything.

Baker: So, then were the men you cared for there, were they mostly World War II veterans or were these men from the Korean War that were coming in?

Terhaar: When I was recalled?

Baker: Yeah, when you worked in San Diego at the hospital.

Terhaar: Those were Korean, mostly. Well, they had been there from World War II because the regular Navy is all ages and they're in there all the time. But I had to work with reserve and regular Navy nurses. And the regular Navy nurses were so irritated that the reserves were called in, and we didn't want to be there in the first place. You can imagine the atmosphere at our dining room tables. The regular Navy nurses didn't like us because we came with all this experience from the outside world, and they had been in there all the time. They didn't have quite as much variety of experience as we did. And they didn't like us. And we didn't ask to be there so there was a lot of--

Baker: Tension there between--

Terhaar: Very much. I liked the work, and it was very interesting, extremely interesting. And the people who you got to meet were very, very good. Just some of the best doctors from Rochester were into the service, and from all over the United States. I think the Navy is the cream of the crop. I really think it's a fine organization. I couldn't complain about it. But the psych work was very, very good. And the worst of it was that none of us knew the reserves that were recalled, how long we would be in. This was tearing up our lives. I came from this good supervisory job that I worked with after being at the U that increased my stature at the VA. All of that did, I was more valuable. And then, to leave all that, get called, go down there again. But, I could see their need there, I could just see it. But no one knew how long. You know, who knew how the long the Korean War was going to last. But these people worked on. Finally, after the war was on for about a year, I was there about seventeen months in all, but in that seventeen months, I got a change of duty again. And I thought, well, that upset me. Because I thought seventeen months, when I finally was told it would be seventeen months because by that time they said, "Well, in seventeen months you'd have enough points, and we'll say the reserves that were called against their will could get out." But then, about halfway through, they said they need a lot more nurses at Oakland, Oak Knoll Hospital in Oakland. I thought of how many time I went over that bridge that is all blown up [referring to recent earthquake]. Oak Knoll Hospital, I was in Oakland for about six months.

Baker: Now, what year was this that you were recalled?

Terhaar: 1951.

Baker: '51, okay.

Terhaar: March of '51.

Baker: '51, so halfway through you were sent to Oakland. What were your duties there?

Terhaar: Great big hospital. They had every type of war you could have. Many, many amputees there, but I didn't have to work too much with them. Except if I was on night duty, I'd have maybe an amputee ward or two in addition to my psych wards. Because I got in there primarily because again of my psychiatric experience, and they had a huge psychiatric department, locked and unlocked. Some of them would get on top of roofs and try to kill themselves. Many of them tried to kill themselves, run across a bluff and try to break their necks. Some WAVES were trying to kill themselves, too. And so, the experience was very diversified. And I just didn't know how long it would take. But the amputees were there because they had a center that built prostheses.

Baker: Prostheses, okay. These were Korean?

Terhaar: These were Korean, mostly Korean, yes. But, of course, again, a big general hospital.

Baker: Right, you have to take care of everything.

Terhaar: You have people in from everything, including dependents. Everything was there. It's huge, those hospitals. They're big. It's an experience, you get your duty and say, well, where do you have to go your first duty in the morning. We had a nurses quarters there, I was in a private room. There again, it was quite nice living. Very nice. I can't complain.

Baker: Okay. How about the situation with the other nurses, the regular?

Terhaar: You could still see it again, this terrific reserve-regular. They always would seek out the regular nurses to go out with socially. And you got your orders all alone, as a reserve when you came up there. Well, gee, the social life, it was hard to find kindred spirits sometimes.

Baker: Okay.

Terhaar: So, you found that to be a problem. It wasn't always easy. And because there wasn't that much time left anymore, six months, and I was counting the time. It's very hilly in Oakland. All those buildings are built on, really hilly. And those guys in those wheelchairs with those amputees would go down, they'd try to go on liberty and they'd hang behind a car on Fridays and get drunk and come in. Oh, it was terrific. Just terrific experience. And I was where we had patients in irons lungs. If I was on night duty, I did a lot of that work. And contagion, I did some work in contagion. So, it was, I'd say, an experience. It was a big psychiatric department. And so, when I was there they even put out booklets and everything to enable new patients to be acclimated to it in a hurry. So, they got an orientation. It was all very good experience. And they said, speaking of why they built a hospital with a bizarre up and down business in the hills of Oakland, they said Eleanor flew up there, Eleanor Roosevelt, and she was up in an airplane and they said, "Now where are we going to have this next hospital?" They said she dropped her handkerchief and when they followed it that's where she dropped it. [both laugh] That was Navy talk, I know. It was ridiculous, because it was so silly.

Baker: So, then, you never had to overseas. You were never sent overseas.

Terhaar: Except they said be ready at any time. You had all your oil for the raincoats and everything. You had to have that available. But they told me early, I got that by scuttlebutt, "Don't volunteer for anything. Don't volunteer for South Seas, don't volunteer for this. If you get orders, you have to do it." Every order that I got, you had to follow through. But if you asked for it, and you get a lemon, you asked for it and you're stuck with it. Some of my friends did get

lemon jobs. Oh, they got South Pacific intestinal worms and all kinds of horrible diseases. And some of them asked for it. I just said, “Oh, God. I’ll just take what I get.”

Baker: Just let them dish out the orders.

Terhaar: But they said have your oiled, silk raincoats and everything available at all times because you don’t know. You don’t know if you’re going. You’re living from...

Baker: Day at a time. Take it as it comes.

Terhaar: Yes.

Baker: Okay. So then, you were in Oakland until they let you?

Terhaar: I think it was August of ’52.

Baker: ’52. Okay.

Terhaar: And I went in in ’51. My points were up, and I had the seventeen months. So in all, I’ve had three years and three months, and seventeen months.

Baker: Okay. A lot of time.

Terhaar: A lot of time—near five years, or you might say five years.

Baker: Right. So then, you came back to Minnesota right from then? Did they give you your job back here?

Terhaar: Then, I relaxed. I took the time I needed. Oh, I needed time, mental and physical. I sympathize with anybody who has wartime duty, no doubt about that. It’s very demanding. And so then, I took all the time off that I possibly could, and then of course they had to give you back

your job. They had to. Pay wise, I got the same as though I had been there all the time, with my increases and so forth. But I had to take a job like a new personnel coming in there. I mean, on a ward. I was a supervisor when I left.

Baker: Okay. So they started you back down at the bottom.

Terhaar: I went back down to the bottom. I gave up everything.

Baker: When they called you back to the service, did you have to take a cut in pay?

Terhaar: You mean in the Navy?

Baker: From when you worked at the VA here, did you take cut when they recalled you?

Terhaar: No, as an officer that part of it was quite well-compensated because you were an officer, besides food and lodging, it was all compensated that way so that you got fairly good pay that way, yes. That pay wasn't too bad. But when I got back, because of my longevity and then I had more points because I had been in the Korean War, they had to give me compensation for that at the VA to make up. I didn't lose so much in my pay as I lost in my status coming back. It was hard to go back after all that experience. Even patients that came out there, I had worked with in the service in San Diego. But to have that be behind you with all this tremendous experience and then you have to go down to the bottom of the barrel there. That hurt.

Baker: Sure. I believe that.

Terhaar: The only thing that saved me was the fact that I knew that was the thing to do with the amount of time I had there plus my Navy time. If I was ever going to retire, I just put up with it. You know, you do a lot.

Baker: That's for sure. Of the two experiences, World War II and the Korean, which was better for you would you say?

Terhaar: Well, being that it was something that I volunteered for in World War II, your whole attitude is different. And it was so completely new, war itself was, and the experience and the whole thing was such a new experience for me. But that was more fulfilling. I was more equipped for the needs for San Diego. I was more capable of doing it. I was more advanced in every which way after being at the university and everything else. I was more equipped. But I wasn't happy with it, you see, because I had to do it.

Baker: Right, they made you, wasn't volunteer. I understand that. What would you say was the most frustrating of any of your experiences?

Terhaar: Well, the one thing that was frustrating was going back in San Diego and seeing they had a terrific amount of employed civilians there, not military. But they were employed in the military, but were civilians. And their lackadaisicalness, their casualness, their "don't care"—when I was recalled to do my job against my will, was a good job I had—and they with their attitude of it was always "come see, come saw." "I'll get it today or mañana," everything was. That hurt, you know, that attitude.

Baker: Did they get along well? Did the civilians get along well with the military?

Terhaar: There was a little bit of a barrier because some of them were hired for special skills and they got better salaries than the military. They were doing some of the same work, the military as they were, but some of them were not getting the pay that they were. And their attitude of business was so lacking. It's frustrating when you put in as much as I put in and leaving a job that I worked so hard for and to go and put up with this or have to call six times

for—see, I was an officer who had to have everything supplied—to call and wonder why this order wasn't taken care of, like to repair things. That could go and go and go, have to call and call and call, and things like that. Or they wouldn't supply your orders, and they'd just put lines through stuff and no explanations. You'd have to call again and again to find out why you didn't get your equipment. And you had to keep your ward supplied. You were the one in charge.

Baker: Did these civilians live--

Terhaar: In San Diego and all over.

Baker: They didn't live in--

Terhaar: They were civilians. They lived off station. Brought their cars in there every day.

Baker: Okay. What was most satisfying for you, do you think, in your experiences? Can you think of something in particular?

Terhaar: Oh, there were many. I can think of a particular burn case at the primary air station in Norman, Oklahoma, where the fellow was so terribly burned. The soles of his feet were the one thing that wasn't burned. We had to work so hard with him. And I would try umpteen things on my own. Besides the orders that I had, I would try on my own to try and get those burns healed up, and it was just terrible. And the satisfaction of having this guy get well. He had some scarring, but then I heard from him later on. He was in Kansas City. I'd hear from him after I was out because it was something you got to know somebody quite well when they're in long months in a hospital. So, I think that was very satisfying to have this man put on his uniform and go home.

Baker: Oh, I believe that. Being there weren't a lot of women, did the men accept women in the service? I'm sure they were accepted as nurses because that's something they had to have, you know.

Terhaar: You know, we had to be treated as officers. We had big parties on weekends at quarters, you know. We had great big places like Coronado Island that's off of San Diego. Beautiful, beautiful buildings, and beautiful parties. We were well accepted. You were as accepted as could be among your officers group, and your enlisted personnel had to respect you. You know, you could get anybody in the brig for insubordination. And you, as an officer, could do it.

Baker: Okay. So, there was no--

Terhaar: I didn't think that there was that. But, people on the outside sometimes thought—I could tell when I was talking to civilians you know.

Barker: Okay. That's what I was wondering.

Terhaar: That some civilians thought that a woman in the service was maybe an easy mark—the philosophy.

Baker: Sure. I've heard that before. Okay.

Terhaar: Oh yes. And that just—when I got that drift, and I would get it here, there, at a variety of places and not so much within the military as some of these civilians.

Baker: The civilians more then.

Terhaar: They'd think that because you were a woman in the service you were cheap.

Baker: Right. I heard the remark from someone else who said that they told them right to this person's face, "Well, you're a slut," because you're in the service.

Terhaar: Yes. And I've worked with far too many Navy WAVES and far too many officers and far too many enlisted women and Marine girls—I've worked with all of them—and I cannot say that. I cannot say that. And I went to hotels where they went on liberty, and I did and all kinds of people did, we went to big parties in San Francisco—Top of the Mark Hopkins and the Fairmont Hotel, and they were all those wonderful places—and they accepted you and I never saw. I cannot say that, I cannot say they were.

Baker: It's probably a stereotype because, you know.

Terhaar: I think that they built on something, that. It irritated me, and I certainly corrected them when I could see the direction that they were going to. And many a person got their comeuppance from me. [Baker laughs] I knew what they were doing.

Baker: [laughs] That's what you have to do anyway.

Terhaar: Yes. You had to do that.

Baker: Okay. So, you came back, and worked at the VA?

Terhaar: Then, I came back and went back to work there, and that was difficult because of the way I had to start like a new employee. But they were of the opinion that, "Well, you went out and you came back." Your job couldn't stay open for you, your marvelous job that you had. That was filled.

Baker: Sure. They had to replace.

Terhaar: In fact, I oriented the person who was coming in for me. And then, I oriented her, and I was down at the bottom of the barrel. All that really hurt.

Baker: So, did you work your way up then?

Terhaar: Oh, yes.

Baker: Did you retire from there then?

Terhaar: Yes.

Baker: Okay.

Terhaar: Twenty-five years, and they gave me credit for with the Navy and all that. So, I have a fairly good retirement. I should have for all that I went through.

Baker: I was wondering, you saw a lot of cases—combat injuries, other injuries—did that have an effect on you, do you think, as far as seeing the ravages of war, more or less?

Terhaar: I cannot help but feel that war is a horrible thing. And that it's devastating to people. Some people will never, never be the same. I think of all the cord bladder cases that their spinal cords are cut, and they are paralyzed. I did a lot of wards of that. And some of them died, they just got thin and thin and thin and just faded away. Young men, you know. Cord bladder cases were horrible. And I think no one really knows how they have given up their lives. And some of them were married and had children and they would show you. That's the first thing when they came from overseas was to show their families and show their children their pictures. Because from combat they'd come from three weeks on a ship and they were just full of maggots. Oh, it was awful. And they'd be so hungry for milk, so wanting a salad and things like people take for

granted, but they hadn't had this on those islands. And they were just starving for it. I couldn't give them enough milk. And getting those casts off with the maggots, it was horrible.

Baker: Oh, they would get underneath.

Terhaar: Underneath the casts, the maggots would get under. That was really something. So, people who go through that—if you see it and live it and those people experiencing it—you cannot. It's an experience I wouldn't—I'd say there isn't a million dollars that would ever pay you for your experience, or whatever. But at the same time, knowing what I did of World War II, I didn't want to go into it again. You know, I didn't. War, again, was not--

Baker: Sure. What was the attitude at these bases? You were in the United States, staying here. What was the attitude, say, towards the United States government or with the whole war issue?

Terhaar: Well, the attitude for World War II was, "We're in this thing, we gotta win it." Everybody's gung-ho. You were for it because you got to get through. We've got to lick Germany. We've got to lick Japan. And it was the upbeat all the way.

Baker: Okay. Real patriotic types then, gung-ho?

Terhaar: Yes. And when you came home on leave, people wanted to know things and they wanted to know your experience. They were happy about it all.

Baker: So, when you came home--

Terhaar: You felt proud.

Baker: Right, and you were almost looked at as a hero or a--

Terhaar: A patriot, right. You did something great, you know.

Baker: --in contrast to, say, the Vietnam War when people came back, and they were spit on and called “killers” and that type of thing.

Terhaar: I’d say the Korean War was not as—well, you don’t even hear much about the Korean War.

Baker: Right. You don’t.

Terhaar: You don’t know much about it. Just now, they’re thinking of the women that were in it. They’re thinking they’re going to do something because we never got any special recognition. And I heard that they’re going to do something for the women in the Korean War because it just wasn’t brought up very much. But, there wasn’t the same feeling, but they always said that wasn’t a war, it was a police action. You know, that kills you right there. It was war to everybody. They were killed, and they were hurt and they had frozen legs, and everything. That’s why there were some of these amputees because they had frozen legs, and they never were dressed warm enough. Our servicemen didn’t have warm enough clothes and got frozen legs and things like that. There wasn’t the same attitude for the Korean War, the, “We’re in this thing and we gotta win this.” I mean, it wasn’t the same as World War II. It was low key.

Baker: Well, do you think too, that it had something to do with the fact it was shortly after World War II, and all of a sudden this was here?

Terhaar: That’s right. Here it was, and people weren’t ready for that. I mean, they weren’t psyched up for it at all.

Baker: No, no.

Terhaar: And then it was even worse for the Vietnam War. It was a degree worse for the Vietnam War, you know. There the people came back and were horrible to them. I think that was so terrible. People went through war, and then they should come back and be spit on or not looked at or downgraded, that was just awful. I never felt that way, although it was a putdown to have to go to the Korean War. But, I didn't feel that people looked down on me because I was recalled. Oh no, I didn't get that feeling. But I have friends who said that the Vietnam War, they came back and they tried to get out of uniform as fast as they could. They were just downgraded because they were in it. Which is wrong, just terribly wrong to do. Those people were not to blame for that.

Baker: No, that's for sure.

Terhaar: I don't know why thinking goes like that sometimes.

Baker: Well, that was a whole different type of war. I think they're still trying to figure that one out.

Terhaar: [laughs] I don't know if they ever will. Confusion reigns.

Baker: So, this was after you got back to the VA.

Terhaar: After I got back and got working, I recognized that I needed more peace of mind from the standpoint that I needed the security of never having to go into war again because I was still with the status of a United States Reserve, Navy Reserve nurse. And I never got—you got put on active duty/inactive duty. That's how you were assigned. When I got out, I was put on inactive duty. When you're assigned and you have to go to it, you were put on active duty. But I never got the discharge from the reserves. But I needed this, and I needed this peace of mind. So then I

wrote the Twelfth Naval District in Chicago, Great Lakes. And it took, I think I had several doctors that were of the opinion it might be a very good idea if I did that. And that is a formal letter I wrote. And they took about four or five months, and they said honorable discharge. And they gave me these letters from admirals and Harry Truman. And I was honorably discharged with all the recommendations and all the happiness and commendable rewards that the service would give me.

Baker: So then, you did not get an honorable discharge certificate then until--

Terhaar: Until I requested it.

Baker: You were put back in the reserves?

Terhaar: I was again reserve, eligible again for another war. And I said, I needed that. I needed to get out and have it finished. Now, I'm discharged, honorable discharge from the United States Navy and the reserve. 232061 is my number. So then, I was very happy. I felt relaxed. I said, "This is it! I can't be called." That was very difficult too. Then, I could go to work relaxed and know that now I'll work towards my retirement and forget about all this business. You know, you have to have peace of mind one way or another in your life. It's not easy.

Baker: Okay. Thank you.