

Pritzker Military Library
Ruth Berger Oral History Interview
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- MARRAPODE: Today is June 14th. My name is Nick Marrapode, and we're at the Pritzker Military Library with Ruth Berger. Just to get to started can you tell me your full name and when and where you were born?
- BERGER: My full name is Ruth Berger and I was born in Chicago, Illinois.
- MARRAPODE: Did you grow up in Chicago?
- BERGER: I grew up in Evanston.
- MARRAPODE: In Evanston?
- BERGER: Yes, went to the grammar school and high school and went to Evanston Township High School and then I went to Evanston Hospital with my nurses' training. They allowed one Jewish nurse a year.
- MARRAPODE: Officially?
- BERGER: That was the quota system at that time. Remember? That's the way it was with Northwestern.
- MARRAPODE: Can you tell me about growing up in Evanston?
- BERGER: Growing up in Evanston as a Jew was very bad because there were only five or six Jewish families, and when my folks lost the house we couldn't rent anywhere because they would come and look up to see that we were Jewish landlords. We finally rented from a Jewish landlord on Main Street that's when I went to nurses' training. Evanston Township High School had the blacks sit in the last two rows when I went there.
- MARRAPODE: It was very segregated?
- BERGER: All of Evanston was anti-Semitic but it was very segregated, yes.
- MARRAPODE: What line of work were your parents in?
- BERGER: My mother did bookkeeping. I remember my father was a civil engineer and then he finally got into real-estate, and that's where he made his

money, but during the war he was a civil engineer adding on to buildings for the war effort.

MARRAPODE: What about the Great Depression and the economic downturn how did that affect your family?

BERGER: Lost our house.

MARRAPODE: Lost your house.

BERGER: Yes, my folks were in the barbeque business because my mother was an excellent cook, and we had a barbeque on the Westside of Madison and Hammond and we put all the relatives there. We all learned how to, my brothers and I learned how to work in the restaurant. My folks built this. My father being a civil engineer he built the barbeque and then my mother had learned from Florida how to barbeque hamburger and chicken and ribs and stuff. The name of the barbeque at that time wouldn't pass today because its name, Picaninny. The front of the building had a little black boy that was, had a hatchet and he was chasing a chicken maybe it was a blackhead.

MARRAPODE: That wouldn't fly today?

BERGER: No, that wouldn't fly today. We had two other places too but then we had to get out of the business because the Depression was coming and my father figured he could get better work if he worked for the government.

MARRAPODE: You still lost the house?

BERGER: We lost the house. At that time it was easy to lose a house because apparently from what I understand the mortgages weren't like how they are today, if you didn't make a payment...

MARRAPODE: That was it? How aware were you of what was going on in Europe at that time when you were growing up, and the rise of Nazism in Europe and Imperial Japan in the Pacific?

BERGER: I began nurses training like at; I don't think I was too aware. I just know when I got through with my training the last month like that the last year the government decided that they would put me on a cadet program where they paid for my tuition. Tuition was very cheap so before I went to nurses' training I did waitress worker and worked for the government in a nursery school to get into nurses' training, but the last year the

government paid for it. Then you had to have, the contract was that if you, the government paid for it that you had to join the Army.

MARRAPODE: Where did you start your nurses' training?

BERGER: I started in probably 1941 because in '44 I went in the Army. I graduated and went in the Army. There were no men around. There were decent men around so most of the nurses just joined the Army.

MARRAPODE: What made you decide to go into nurses' training in the first place?

BERGER: I really don't know. My mother didn't want me to do it so I did it to spite her. She didn't want me to go overseas so I spite and went overseas.

MARRAPODE: You were kind of rebellious?

BERGER: Yes, I figured my parents shouldn't rule my life like that, and I was very interested in doing something.

MARRAPODE: You joined the service?

BERGER: I was at Camp McCoy.

MARRAPODE: At Camp McCoy?

BERGER: Yes, I had pictures of me in Camp McCoy.

MARRAPODE: What was Camp McCoy like?

BERGER: Where you drilled. They got drill...

MARRAPODE: Did they teach you how to march and..?

BERGER: Oh yes.

MARRAPODE: Really?

BERGER: Sure, went to basic training.

MARRAPODE: What was basic training like?

BERGER: Drilling.

MARRAPODE: Drilling?

BERGER: And eating, yes.

MARRAPODE: Was it physically intensive training? Was it difficult?

BERGER: No, it wasn't difficult.

MARRAPODE: Was it all nurses at Camp McCoy? Who was there?

BERGER: I don't remember. I was just with a bunch of nurses all I know, and then they asked what'd you like to do, and they had openings for people to go on airplanes or on a train, and I thought the train would be more interesting.

MARRAPODE: Why?

BERGER: I don't know.

MARRAPODE: You did a lot of these things on a whim it sounds like you went into nurses' training and decided that you wanted to go overseas.

BERGER: Yes, so anyhow I got a picture of myself.

MARRAPODE: Sure.

BERGER: Then you went finally to I think I gave this to you.

MARRAPODE: Yes, I've seen these pictures.

BERGER: Then when I gave, after Camp McCoy then when I gave then they shipped you, you know, overseas and I landed in Lahar and I landed in a tent, like that, and was slept with a bunch of girls and then they were forming trains. We went out to Paris and that's where they in stations, the stations in Paris are where they formed the trains, and you see a train here. These are Officers and these are enlisted men, that's me, and that's me, and that's me here. You see the train and...

MARRAPODE: When did you arrive in Europe?

BERGER: I arrived in 1944 and, '44 and '45 when the war was over, but when we went there the main purpose was that it was going to be terrible battles and there were, it was going to be bad weather and they couldn't fly these guys. Eventually when we were stationed in Paris we started going up to Liege and then the Germans were buzz bombing, but our GI's were fighting so we would evacuate and we rented cattle cars from England and we converted into them ward cars and made them. You can see where I sit in the opening of the ward cars. They had three decker high bunks and the ice came off from the field hospital and the doctors in the field hospital. We were just behind them about 30/40 miles away or something, and ambulances would come and we would fill up the ward cars with either

two or three hundred patients and our purpose was to take care of them, give them penicillin, sulfa, make sure their bandages were okay, if their bowels were shot through they were put on their belly, and then we made sure that we changed the bandages so that they wouldn't get peritonitis. When they had shrapnel wounds we made sure that the wounds were covered and dressed properly because when a guy gets a shrapnel-wound a certain amount of this deep and this wide of flesh will die. In World War I they all got gangrene, but we knew how to prevent it and when I was a nurse before I went into the service we never, we had a drawer with pills when I worked in Evanston Hospital. We didn't give penicillin, sulfa. When I got in the service, they started giving out penicillin and sulfa and we prevented gangrene and a lot of things even going on today like that. The unfortunately wars advanced medicine and that's what my hospital train and other hospitals did. We advanced medicine by penicillin sulfa.

MARRAPODE: You were really almost like the cutting edge of medical technology for that time.

BERGER: Yes.

MARRAPODE: You were on the railcars.

BERGER: Yes.

MARRAPODE: Were there different types of cars of the hospital train or was it all uniform?

BERGER: No, the cattle cars were the ward cars then we had a pharmacy and then next to the pharmacy we had a place where if patients died we could use it as a morgue. One time we did use it as a morgue because we evacuated people from a concentration camp and they were dying like flies so we used it as a morgue. We also slept on the train so we had our own cars and then we had our own day-room and then they had a kitchen and the guys by then that worked on the ward cars they had their own wards, their own cars too. We slept two to a compartment. The GIs slept four to a compartment, a bed here, a bed here, a bed here, and a bed here. We had at least thirty cars maybe, if you look at the size of this thing here, and then we had an inventory car that if a guy wasn't on a stretcher and he was sort of wounded but could walk, we could carry 64 patients. We also could carry Germans so I used to take off their bandage. My husband threw away swastikas as had souvenirs and my husband saw them and in the

drawer, he went and threw them away. I could've gotten money for them. Anyhow because we were all mad at the Germans.

MARRAPODE: How many nurses would serve in each ward car?

BERGER: Four nurses.

MARRAPODE: Four nurses in a ward car?

BERGER: No, you were in charge of three or four ward cars.

MARRAPODE: Per nurse?

BERGER: You taught our GIs there that were flunkouts from the Air Corps how to give shots, and then you had to give a lot of water because they took penicillin and at that time it was kind of penicillin called crystals in the bladder so you had to make sure that they drank a lot of water, and the guys in the ward cars I think they had to empty the urinals and feed them and do all the work and our job because each ward car had a little cabinet and we had forces and alcohol and then we got to Paris of course we had penicillin on each ward car like that. I guess they couldn't just take care of ward car. We couldn't take of one ward car. We would just run around unsupervised.

MARRAPODE: You supervised the enlisted men who had you taught how to give some basic...

BERGER: Penicillin, sulfa, and change dressings, those things, and then of course naturally they had to empty bed pans and urinals, wash the dishes because we gave them, couldn't give them a whole lot. We had two to three hundred prisoners, not prisoners, GIs, and so we gave them stuff and drink and eat, made sandwiches for them and stuff like that. I drew cartoons that I worked on in the hospital train; you could see here the guys washing the dishes. You see all the cups like that, and then there was a buzz bomb. They were scared to death which I wasn't, so they were trying hide and I didn't know difference because I was real young. What's this guy doing? I don't know. Some of these things I forgot.

MARRAPODE: Looks like he's carrying a tray of food?

BERGER: Yes, I guess for the GIs, yeah, sandwiches and stuff like that.

MARRAPODE: You said the enlisted men that were on the train were...

BERGER: These are all enlisted men.

MARRAPODE: They were from the Air Corps?

BERGER: They were dropouts from the Air Corps. Here you can see a box like that. This one was because when we heard the buzz bombs, which I was never afraid of. They were scared to death. He's trying to push them up and they're all trying to hide underneath, and then here's a worker, guess what, he's emptying...

MARRAPODE: Emptying the bucket.

BERGER: Yes, and here's where, this is more like it when they were really hiding, trying to hide because when they were on the field they could get in a trench, but we were sitting ducks, and one of the hospital train was hit. There were three or four hospital trains at that time, and we heard one was hit. I think I was as dumb enough, I really didn't know like that. Here is this just giving water and then I'm getting wet, but he had to put water on the train, and then when we got to Paris we cleaned up our cars and refilled them like that at the station, but we had very, very strong technique, and generally we went out to front we turned off all the air-conditioning, all the air, they heated the cars like that, and many times when we slept on the way up like that there was icicles from the ceiling because we tried to save on coal when they were using to heat up the cars, and this is one of a hot dog, they served a lot of hot dogs. I thought it was terrible.

MARRAPODE: So how did you...

BERGER: Water, heat, and light I guess they are all yelling. So, anyhow I went to art school and wanted to be a cartoonist, but I didn't think I was good enough, and I used to put these up.

MARRAPODE: You used to decorate the train with these?

BERGER: Yes, though the guys would laugh and stuff like that.

MARRAPODE: How did the enlisted men respond to being under the command of female officers?

BERGER: How the enlisted men?

MARRAPODE: How did they I guess respond to being under the command of women, female officers?

BERGER: During the war they liked it. After the war they didn't. They weren't friendly anymore.

MARRAPODE: What changed? What specifically in the way...

BERGER: Because we were officers and they were enlisted men, and they couldn't date us. It wasn't allowed except I dated one of them on the train. I did.

MARRAPODE: You broke the rules?

BERGER: Yes, I broke the rules, and when he went home to New York I went to look him up because he had given me a ring and he said, "I don't know," he says, "I don't know if I'm interested right now. I've got a lot of things on my mind." When I got home he gave me a 'Dear John Letter'. Most of the guys got Dear John Letters. You've heard of that haven't you?

MARRAPODE: Yes.

BERGER: I got a Dear John Letter.

MARRAPODE: A Dear Jane Letter?

BERGER: Yes, Dear Jane Letter like that. After the war we were in 7 or 8 different hospitals until I got enough points to go home, and one of the hospitals was out in Liege, Belgium where we took care of guys that had battle fatigue. What do they call that today now?

MARRAPODE: Post-traumatic stress syndrome.

BERGER: Yes, and they made them, give them Pentothal. We used to play cards with them. What else could we do with them? The doctor gave them Pentothal and made them live through their battles like that. I wasn't...

MARRAPODE: What's Pentothal?

BERGER: It's a, it put people half-asleep. They would be put completely out and made them live through their battles. We fought battle fatigue in World War II before, now they fight them like crazy, and some of these guys it lasts so long. In fact they sometimes they have a lifetime of suffering like that, but this are what show you one of the hospitals that I worked in. Then this is Camp McCoy. Do you see any?

MARRAPODE: I don't think I saw any pictures of Camp McCoy, but I had seen...

BERGER: I don't see any men there. Do you?

MARRAPODE: Nope. How did you get along with the other women in training?

BERGER: Here, here we are too, and the reason we wore these because it's a three-decker high like that. The guys would look if you had a dress see.

MARRAPODE: You had to wear the pants.

BERGER: Yes, so you saw that, here I am at Camp McCoy. I don't know which one I am.

MARRAPODE: Maybe on the left?

BERGER: Here? I think I'm this, I think that's me. We got along real well in fact I still, this girl Lucas, like that we wrote to each other like that. She passed away. Tucker came to Chicago here to visit me. She got herself pregnant and had to be discharged from the Army. If you were pregnant, we went to one hospital after the war and she went with a GI and got herself pregnant, and then she went to Paris, had a baby, and they sent her home, and then when she looked up the guy he didn't want to marry her, and when I went to the New York Fair I visited her and then she came here about two years ago to visit me and now she was married her second time and now she's got a boyfriend a third time and she lives in Florida, and she has my email and I have her email, you know, when she came to visit here we had a wonderful talk to each other because we got along well because she's a Brooklyn Jewish girl like that, and she was a lot of fun but I don't know I mean I sent her emails and she just gives me a little bit answer like that, you know, so one of these times I'm going to type my stuff and, you know, please don't answer me like that, but "Thank you, Ruth," like that but we got along real well. This gal here Tucker I lost track of her. The first nurse that took, this gal here let's see what was her name?

MARRAPODE: Second on the left?

BERGER: Yes, I forgot her name. Anyhow she replaced one of the girls that I was in nurses' training with, came on her hospital train and the first commanding, the doctor. This was a doctor that was in charge of a train and then they had two assistants like that. You see that in these pictures here, and here those are the officers. Yes. Luke.

MARRAPODE: You had...

BERGER: Doctor!

MARRAPODE: You had the doctor in the middle?

BERGER: Here's the doctor.

MARRAPODE: On the left?

BERGER: Yes.

MARRAPODE: He's in charge of the whole train, all the patients, the nurses, and I guess...

BERGER: They had three different doctors.

MARRAPODE: Then he has two assistants who are also doctors?

BERGER: Yes, of course, no, they were just general...

MARRAPODE: General Officers?

BERGER: General Officers in charge of train running and staffing...

MARRAPODE: They weren't Medical Officers?

BERGER: No, but they had to learn how to staff our training room, equipment, and everything, sterile equipment. Here you can see the guys here sitting on the bench with me. Here's the ambulatory car that's where 64 patients would sit. We'd seen the rest of these pictures.

MARRAPODE: These aren't bunks or beds either. They're seats.

BERGER: They're seat 64 people sat there, yeah.

MARRAPODE: These were patients who...

BERGER: This was in London because she had relatives in London and after the war when we were up in Liege, Belgium we went to visit her relatives so we flew to London and visited her relatives, visited one of her relatives. I'm sitting on the toilet seat because we were up to Germany at that time and this was all bombed. Let me see if we got a few of me horsing around. I'm going to show here when we were up to the Rhine River. You see there?

MARRAPODE: Yes.

BERGER: There's a bridge down.

MARRAPODE: A blown out bridge.

BERGER: Yes, but see we take these pictures because we were waiting for patients like that, so somebody had a camera. I never took any of these pictures. These guys take a lot of pictures and they would give them to me.

MARRAPODE: This one is in Germany as well.

BERGER: It is?

MARRAPODE: I think so.

BERGER: Yes, Germany. A couple of the boys and just fooling around; I don't know what the hell I guess I was acting like a bride.

MARRAPODE: They found some cop hats for themselves.

BERGER: Yes, and you know I was written up in the JUF you know that because I gave you an article so.

MARRAPODE: Yes, I do have a copy of that here.

BERGER: I was written up here. That's the picture of me, but see this here picture of me, no that was, that wasn't in England, no, that was up in Liege, Belgium. This guy was Jewish and he was in a Jewish Brigade. He was, had an English uniform on. He fought for the British, but he was Jewish, and then you know what happened.

MARRAPODE: From the Palestinian; or because there were Jewish soldiers from the Palestinian units of the British?

BERGER: Yes, that's what he was, yes. He gave me his name and after the war he wanted me to come to live with him and marry him, and I couldn't speak, I couldn't learn Hebrew. I just, but then let me see page 12. I don't know the picture of me here. It's the same picture. I never read up on page 12. Another girl in my unit was written up. See, when I got home I joined a feminist group called Just Women Veterans Veterans and they wanted people right up to date with JUF people that were overseas, and she was overseas so she was written up. She was in the Philippines. See, this is D-Day. And you see what the date on this is? June 1994. 50 year of D-Day.

MARRAPODE: That's the...

BERGER: Terrible. This is made England. I don't know why I put this picture. I guess I gave a bunch of pictures so they thought this was nice so they put it here. That's me there. Jesus I think I look terrible. I'll give you this stuff like that.

MARRAPODE: Do you have any more copies of this?

BERGER: Yes.

MARRAPODE: We just went over a pretty big time span relatively quickly. Do you mind if I kind of step back a little bit and ask a few questions about earlier in your service?

BERGER: Sure.

MARRAPODE: Can you tell me about the shipping out of the United States initially? What it was like, what that was like leaving the country. What the voyage across the Atlantic was like for you.

BERGER: Shipping out like that I don't have too much of a memory, but I know that on the ship like that that we had real nice quarters and the gal that was with me, there was nurses training with me like that, she liked to have a lot of boyfriends so she used to have me keep one boyfriend busy while she ran on the other side of the ship who kept the other boyfriend busy.

MARRAPODE: She didn't have a boyfriend on every port; she had a boyfriend, a couple of boyfriends on the ship as well?

BERGER: Yes, she would. Yes, and then when she got overseas like she started , the guard commanding officer didn't like her so we transferred her off and we got Tucker that's her name Tucker in her place like that, and she stayed in a hospital in Paris and she told me she had an experience where she took a nurse up to the operating room and she got rid of her baby by going up and scraping her uterus so they were just horsing around like that, and she fell in love with the guy on our train that was a pharmacist. He used to write letters when he was enlisted men so I used to cosign his letters so nobody else would read them because an officer could cosign them and then nobody else would read them. They got married and they had children, and they eventually lived in, he eventually went back to school and became worked for Johnson & Johnson and then he came back. He lived in the east and then he lived all over Europe for a while and then he came back here, and my husband and I became very close friends them, and they bought a townhouse in Wilmette and then they bought assisted living way out in I don't know one of the large suburbs and they both passed away.

MARRAPODE: You help...

BERGER: Cancer.

MARRAPODE: You helped to keep their love letters secret during the war.

BERGER: Yes, during the war but I just don't remember too much when we shipped off. I don't know why I don't remember. I remember the ship because I was running around with keeping Melissa's boyfriends busy, and then when we landed in Lahar like that I remember sleeping in this long tent with a bunch of people and we had to go out to the latrine and I accidentally dropped my flashlight in the latrine all the way down there was all poo and crap down there, and when I came back I says, "I lit up the latrine."

MARRAPODE: How long were you in Lahar for?

BERGER: Not long. Only for about a week because they were forming the trains real fast so they kept putting us on a train and all of sudden we were right into Paris in the station.

MARRAPODE: Paris is where your trains were based.

BERGER: Based in the station.

MARRAPODE: You were bringing patients from you said thirty to forty miles from the frontlines and then taking them back to the hospitals in Paris to be...

BERGER: We took the patients, we filled, you know, all of our equipment, and our straw equipment, and our penicillin like that and we'd scrubbed the cars and everything and then we went wherever they told us to go, and we either took them to Paris, Cherbourg, or Lahar.

MARRAPODE: Did you know when you were going out from your stations in Paris, Cherbourg, or Lahar? Did you know where the train was going?

BERGER: No.

MARRAPODE: Or you were just...

BERGER: No, our Officers. They were in charge.

MARRAPODE: Okay.

BERGER: No.

MARRAPODE: Do you remember any specific times that were really difficult or where you took on a lot of people like any battles that you knew of?

BERGER: Sure. We took one time a bunch of guys. They were in a concentration camp, and they weighed 50 to 60 pounds dying from TB, and we had to try to feed them, and we wore masks, and we gave them cups to spit

because they were spitting out and their diarrhea. They were just a holy mess, and we all figured we were going to get TB. None of us did because TB is very hard to spread. One person can give it to hundreds and a lot of TB patients when they spit it out or they're spewing bowels like that instantly for most people. Then TB doesn't really travel that far. Well one person can get it like on a train, a plane or a bus.

MARRAPODE: When the contingents are so close.

BERGER: Yes, see my husband's father got TB. Nobody else got it. He must have got it on, you know, was on the plane, a bus, or something like that. He spits it out. I never got TB but it was horrible. I didn't really know what to do with them; kept lightening them up and all like that. Then another time they had guys that they missed because when you went in the service before you went to Camp McCoy you went to Chicago to have a doctor examine you, and I had tendency to have my pressure up like that so this Liz, my friend Liz, I think gave me a sedative so I was half asleep with the doctors took my blood pressure and everything like that so I think it was because of her that I got in because my brother was discharged, my twin brother was discharged because he had a blood pressure problem after a month he got discharged, but he's buried now with a stone because if you're in a month you can have an Army, a veteran stone.

MARRAPODE: You had to take a sedative to keep your blood pressure down to get into the service?

BERGER: That I remember when the doctor examined us like that.

MARRAPODE: Yes, and but that was when you were you back in Chicago, that was before...

BERGER: Yes, but I don't know if we left New York. I don't remember what city we left. Tucker would know maybe because she replaced later so she came from Brooklyn, so.

MARRAPODE: So it sounded like it all happened kind of fast. You joined the service and...

BERGER: It all goes real fast.

MARRAPODE: Yes.

BERGER: Yes because the war was on and the war, winter was going to come and we knew they couldn't fight and wounded back like that, but anyhow one

time we picked up a bunch of guys that they missed. The doctors missed and they put them in a hospital to get them out of the way. So one time we decided we should pick them up so we picked up the whole trainload of nuts, people that were mentally ill, and one guy got stuck in the window. We had to pull him out and we had to fill, we had sodium amatol that we would give IV to try to calm them down and we had three or four of us try to pin people down if they get excited, and then we load them on all the way till the harbor onto a hospital ship, and one of our GI's got caught in a line and he had to go over and declare that he was not mentally unhealthy.

MARRAPODE: Bet he was trying to sneak out.

BERGER: I don't know I think he just accidentally got caught in a line like that. That happened to me too when I was a nurse. When you go to nurses training you had to serve at a children's hospital and a mental hospital, and one gal when I was at Denney they caught in the line outside because she was an older nurse and they taugt she was nut because she used to wear nutty clothes.

MARRAPODE: They thought she wasn't one of the people administrating care, she was...

BERGER: But this guy here now he caught in the harbor. Hospital ship, he got taken onto the hospital ship, yeah.

MARRAPODE: These people, these soldiers you picked up were, they suffered from shellshock or PTSD?

BERGER: No.

MARRAPODE: Or they were...

BERGER: They were just mental patients that weren't on cot because they examined you for mental illness and it's not that easy to detect, you know, when a person's paranoid you don't know they're paranoid until they finally kill somebody or hurt somebody or talk against anybody, people who are paranoid hate everybody. You don't know so a lot of times the doctor they test people that were because paranoid people can be very vicious.

MARRAPODE: So these...

BERGER: Or whatever. They were all schitzos or paranoid or they were psychotic, yes.

MARRAPODE: And they ended up all being grouped together in...

BERGER: In a hospital.

MARRAPODE: And?

BERGER: We had to carry them back to, that was terrible like that, we had to lower ourselves, sodium pentothal. It was scary because when I worked in a mental hospital as a student nurse we always went two or three at a time into a ward like that because, you know, a person that's mentally ill you don't know if they're kill you or jump you or whatever. You don't know.

MARRAPODE: But on the train they weren't enough of you to...

BERGER: No! There weren't. But we had our ward guys that would help us out like that and then of course we had to give them Pentothal. The one guy that got stuck with me, I'll never forget him! He got out of the, we had windows on these cars here like that we had windows on the ones on the sides like that and he got stuck in a window.

MARRAPODE: Trying to jump out while the train was moving?

BERGER: Sure! Yes. But anyhow we evacuated the guys that were paralyzed from their neck down and their waist down in a way we weren't able to save them at that time they didn't save those kind of guys like that because if you got wounded and you're paralyzed from your waist down you got a wound, and it's very, very difficult like that to, you know, the way they, I knew some of them might have survived because, you know, they were giving penicillin and sulfa, but we just didn't have the treatment at that time. I don't know how many from World War II would have survived being a paraplegic or a quadriplegic.

MARRAPODE: There were a lot of wounds that you just didn't have the ability to treat.

BERGER: Yes, brain injuries, brain injuries, you just send them home to die. It was tragic. We felt real terrible.

MARRAPODE: Were those the kinds of things that were difficult to deal with emotionally?

BERGER: Yes.

MARRAPODE: Which is the injuries that...

BERGER: You never forget it. You never forget those things.

MARRAPODE: Is there any specific patient that stands out in your memory when you think back?

BERGER: Unfortunately, yes because I have to tell the guys that had come from Chicago and a lot of times many of these people they were from Chicago like that and I said, "Well," you know, "my folks run a restaurant business," and of course a lot of people from Chicago remembered my folks because crazy restaurant that they had. This one guy came, when I came home on the train after the war was over I came home on the train, oh the last hospital that I was in they had all had gotten gonorrhoea and syphilis. They kept them...

MARRAPODE: Separate as well?

BERGER: Yes, they send them home last because we had poor kids on the train and they just treat their penises with arginol. We didn't have, we didn't think of it at that time to give them penicillin which is the treatment well I think that gonorrhoea lately I heard on the television that gonorrhoea is been lately is become resistant to the penicillin so they're trying to find other drugs because it's very prevalent again, but anyhow this, when we see in the dressing, in our rooms I guess where our guests were, and we made the GIs in this hospital give up and walk through and we give them shots while they're walking through. We didn't go to their beds because we were sort of just disgusted that they caught gonorrhoea because we had pro-kits on every on hospital training, every hospital, and every unit had a pro-kit and if you went and slept with somebody like that and you weren't sure you were supposed to use a damn pro-kit.

MARRAPODE: You mean a prophylactic kit?

BERGER: It's a prophylactic kit with arginol and syringes all that, prevented gonorrhoea. It didn't prevent syphilis but I didn't see much syphilis. I don't know what when the war was over when I decided on weekends after I got married I worked on the jailhouse and correction and the VD clinic to get all the equipment. In the jailhouse and corrections there, one girl was burnt on a lip that means that the guy had syphilis and she had mouth sex, yes, but otherwise I never saw syphilis in the Army. They might've had it, but I didn't, it usually it would be on their penis but the first time I really saw primachec was on this one girl that I saw in a house of correction but I only worked for a year like that. I couldn't a jailhouse and correction anymore I went back to nursing. But anyhow gonorrhoea shows up in the blood and there're four stages of gonorrhoea, primary stage, the second

stage is rash and the third stage is dormant and the fourth stage is developing gums like tumors and I think in the muscle and then you died from gonorrhea, you know, a lot of famous people died from gonorrhea because they didn't have treatment, but after the war they developed treatment for gonorrhea too. In the first stage if you gave a mass amount of penicillin you could've cure gonorrhea, I mean syphilis, sure you could cure gonorrhea but syphilis they could cure in the first stage with massive amounts, but I don't know when I went back home on a hospital ship like that I used to play the flute and I always took it with me and I wasn't the best flutist person in the world, and there was a guy on our hospital train and he was a violinist and he was one of our ward men and he was in the Chicago Symphony so he could and we would go down on the ship to the ward and plane like that and he's real good and I'm real lousy, he's giving me dirty looks, but that's what I remember going home we went on a hospital ship.

MARRAPODE: On a hospital, that's how you got back to the...

BERGER: Yes, I got back home, yeah, some of the girls had to work but I just horsed around with my flute. Oh yes, then what I wanted to tell you like that when I got onto the train to go to Fort Sheridan to get discharged, a guy, a GI, on a sleeping car and I get up to the second deck and I pull the curtain and some GI opens it up and says, "I'm coming up," I buzzed a buzzer and the guy, the conductor like that, came over and says, "What happened?" I said, "The guy tried to come up here and sleep with me!" So they arrested him at the station and then after the war was over like that this one guy that was on my hospital train and I told him I came from Chicago, he looked me up. I go "Oh he's a nice guy," I says, "I'll go on a date with him," so we went to a, at that time he didn't drive and I didn't drive, so we took public transportation to the Westside, we went to somebody's house, and all of a sudden like that he said, "Let's go in the kitchen," I says, "Why?" He says, "Well I," you know, "want something in the kitchen," and then he threw, there was a bedroom, and he threw me into the bedroom like that, and jumped on top of me, this is a GI! And he and he raped me. I never told my kids for years and years and years. I never let it bother me and for some reason I went to a woman doctor and she says, "What he did was a terrible thing. He didn't get into you, and there's nothing wrong with you," she says, "just forget and go on with your life," and I very seldom remember except that once in a while when we talk about rape or somebody here and there like that otherwise it blanks out of

my brain, but I feel so bad when a girl gets, ruins her whole life because of rape.

MARRAPODE: Was that...

BERGER: He broke my hymen like that, but he never got inside of me because when I got married my husband couldn't even get inside of me until I got loosened up. So anyhow we learned perseverance.

MARRAPODE: Was sexual violence during the war, the period after the war, relatively common among GIs?

BERGER: Yes, you'd hear it about it on television. Just recently two girls and they don't, and the guys and the officers wouldn't listen to them so then they finally went public and they were on television, two beautiful girls like that, and they had to go get on television and tell the whole world because nobody, the officers wouldn't listen to them. Sure there was plenty of rape.

MARRAPODE: Was there any sort of...

BERGER: I never thought it would hit me.

MARRAPODE: Was there any sort of support structure or anything in the Army to deal with that problem?

BERGER: No, and still isn't today that's why these girls are fighting like that.

MARRAPODE: When you said during the war, nurses and women were treated with a little more respect, but after combat ended, after the war ended, things changed?

BERGER: Changed dramatically. Yes. Being that I was Jewish like that, if I told a guy that I was Jewish, "Oh I don't want to date you anymore."

MARRAPODE: The anti-Semitism that you experienced when you were growing up in Chicago was also pretty prevalent in the armed forces?

BERGER: Yes, that's in this interview here that you read like that. They ask because see this is a Jewish paper so they ask about that, yes.

MARRAPODE: Did the experience of dealing with concentration camp survivors or patients coming from a concentration camp and, I don't know, a lot of American soldiers kind of dealt with concentration camps and that was an experience for a lot of people. Do you felt like that changed attitudes at

all? Or did that not have an effect on the way that the US, the anti-Semitism in the Army?

BERGER: It must've had. Don't you think it had an effect? I know our GIs were affected, and they weren't all Jewish.

MARRAPODE: Just to be exposed to...

BERGER: Guys that are fifty to sixty pounds, couldn't eat, throwing up and diarrhea and horrible. You never forget it. Just I could imagine that any GI there's only a certain percentage of GIs that finally went into the concentration camps and liberated them like that. How can you not be affected? I never forgot. You don't forget things like that. When I was in nurses training I remember the lousiest patients. I don't remember the nice patients. I remember one lousy patient was always crabbing and crabbing all the time and I can still picture him today that's the way the brain works. I imagine a lot of GI's got affected from the concentrate, even if they weren't Jewish. It was horrible!

MARRAPODE: Did your experience with anti-Semitism did that get better after people were made aware of the concentration camps and what had been going on like, you know, what the Nazis been do, had been doing to Jewish people? Was there kind of a retraction of the anti-Semitism within the US or within the US Army?

BERGER: I would think there would be.

MARRAPODE: Most people I guess saw that saw how extreme that that kind of feeling could become and how dangerous that could be I guess that it seems to me that would cause people to act differently towards Jewish Officers and Jewish nurses and Jewish soldiers.

BERGER: Yes, unfortunately though I didn't have chance to see that like that because most of the people I dealt with weren't Jewish.

MARRAPODE: But there were a few. There was the girl from Brooklyn.

BERGER: Yes, and she was, I told you she got pregnant.

MARRAPODE: Yes.

BERGER: The guy's married and has kids, yes. I don't, the one guy that I dated on the hospital train I mean he was Jewish; the rest of the guys weren't Jewish. I didn't come across to many even when I worked in the hospital you see a picture of me working in some of these hospitals, I didn't come

across any Jewish. One hospital that I was in I worked in different shifts, so this one hospital I was in they had repatriated some Germans from the United States here back to France, and no, yes, and put them in hospitals they were in. This one guy was in the hospital. He was a Nazi, and I was walking around and he said, it was evening time I guess I had to work the evening shift, and he said, "Goodnight," what did he say when he got me that got me rolling, "Goodnight, sweetheart," yes.

MARRAPODE: The Nazi?

BERGER: It was a Nazi, yeah, it was "Goodnight, sweetheart." I went over to the people at the station like that and I says, "In the morning and all day tomorrow I don't want that guy to get any food," I said, "He's got to suffer somehow because he had no business saying to me, 'Goodnight, sweetheart.'" A lot of the guys that were treated real, real nice prisoners, you know, in this country like that when they're taken, you know, sent to the United States and taken prisoners, but this guy took advantage of the situation like that, so I never forgot him. I tell everybody that story. I just couldn't tolerate something like that. You hated him so much. Well we all, all of us our gals like that we hated them so much that when they got in, they got, we took some of them when they got wounded like that, and the Japanese of course you couldn't take them. They'd kill themselves. The Germans like that would end up in our hospital. We tore, I have all, I still have it, I have insignias like that and my husband didn't catch one of them. He didn't throw it out so I gave it to gal whose son-in-law loved that kind of stuff.

MARRAPODE: Yes.

BERGER: It was an emblem with a little swastika inside of it.

MARRAPODE: Yes.

BERGER: Yes.

MARRAPODE: But you still had to treat them?

BERGER: Sure you had to treat them but you hated them. But then it isn't so bad because some of the Germans here are real nice. Like the Japanese, what happened to the Japanese? You hated them when you were overseas like that fighting the Japanese because they were just horrible, they were terrible, and yet the Japanese here were in prison camps and they were wonderful people.

MARRAPODE: Here there are so many Americans that are, that have German ancestries.

BERGER: Yes, my husband when he worked at Sears his tailor was a German, and they, he was real friendly. We became very friendly and then when he moved to Florida we went to visit them down there, so his house we stayed on one side because it was like those houses in Florida like that, you shut the door and you had bathroom and a dayroom and a bedroom all to yourself like a little, on one side of the house, so we went into the dayroom and he had some books there and guess what? They were all by Hitler. He came from Germany. He lived in Germany under Hitler and he said that he tried to survive under Hitler and he came here like that and yet he had a book about Hitler. I said I don't know why he keeps a book about Hitler. Your best friend and he kept a book about Hitler.

MARRAPODE: There's a lot of literature that's been written about Hitler and there's been this almost cultural obsession here with understanding Hitler and understanding why he did what he did.

BERGER: Yes, that's true so maybe that's why he kept it or something because he was very friendly to my husband. He and his wife both were.

MARRAPODE: Did you come into contact with any civilians in France or in Germany was that common?

BERGER: No, it wasn't common. One time though that I was in a, when I was, we were in Paris and our train, you know, was getting cleaned up like that so all of sudden all our GIs were lined up. I said, "What the hell is going on here?" and all of sudden I see a dirty women looking at every one of our GIs on our hospital train, looking at them. So I said, "What's going on?" and our main officer says, "Well she got raped and she's going to accuse one of them," which but he whispered to me he says, "I took the guy and hid him," she never was able to identify anybody.

MARRAPODE: The Officers were actively protecting GIs from...

BERGER: From being accused. But they fooled around a lot, but I know I never came across too many French women and even that I think that we stayed in when we went overseas like that; I think that we stayed in London for a while before we went to France.

MARRAPODE: Okay.

BERGER: Yes.

MARRAPODE: And...

BERGER: And

MARRAPODE: On an Army base or the city or?

BERGER: We must've stayed in an Army base. That I remember, yes.

MARRAPODE: Can you tell me about it?

BERGER: I don't remember too much about it. I do remember though that when we would travel around in France like that that sometimes the French people wouldn't be that friendly to us and sometimes I wondered who was our enemy. We all thought that way. In fact my husband and I one time after we got married we went to one of the Crooked Islands and it was a French island, and when we went to restaurant and they wouldn't wait on us, and the same thing happened when we were in France. One time we went into a restaurant and they would wait on us last or they wouldn't wait on us at all. I said, "What kind of people is this? I mean hell." They wouldn't, you know, they have a problem the French people they have a severe problem and they had to try to get over it because a lot of people, a lot of the GIs got to the point where they hated the French so much that they're people would travel there, you know, when they were hurting for people to vacation in France, and they had to change their attitude.

MARRAPODE: The French people didn't make a very good impression on you or a lot of the GIs?

BERGER: A lot of Americans, period.

MARRAPODE: During the war?

BERGER: After, during the war and after the war, yes.

MARRAPODE: You didn't experience...

BERGER: I didn't experience that much from the British because they were so anxious to have us there like that.

MARRAPODE: Yes, they felt that they really needed that...

BERGER: I think we were fairly, I think I got friendly with a couple of British people. They would invite us to their home, but in France we didn't have too good of experience, but the thing that was real nice was that France, Paris is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. When we were in

France, and they told us we had five hours, six hours, we ran around as fast as we could and saw the Arc de Triumph. Well finally I went to see the Folies Bergere. You ever heard of the Folies Bergere?

MARRAPODE: No.

BERGER: It's one of the first places that all the GIs and everybody else goes to because the women dance was topless so you heard about it like that. I ran there and this recently I got to this center now since my husband passed away I got to this center so I won't stay in the house and we play bingo and this one guy that's play bingo I said to him, "I was at the Folies Bergere," he says, "So was I!" he says, "I have the thing," you know, we call of these things from the Folies Bergere.

MARRAPODE: Poster?

BERGER: Yeah, so I said, "Well I was at Folies Bergere, and the GIs were in the audience and they all of a sudden start screaming and yelling. They had to get rid of them because they wanted to go on the stage. They couldn't stand this." "Oh, I can't stand this!" because they hadn't been with girls for so long.

MARRAPODE: Yes, so they had to eject all the GIs?

BERGER: Yes, it was a weird experience like that, but I understand from what this guy said like that that there is no more Folies Bergere; there are other things now. It folded up, but it was one of the first ones, and the women usually were real gorgeous. They didn't take women that were large busted, you know, when not only today if were women dances they take larges busts I really don't know. It wouldn't be ideal I think to, the best thing is the women who are small busted she's a better dancer. Most of your ballet dancers you notice they're all flat-chested.

MARRAPODE: Did you have a lot of opportunities to travel? Were you able to take a lot of leave time or were you pretty much on the train?

BERGER: Yes. I wanted to go to some museum but a lot of the museums were closed, so I was lucky to go to the Folies Bergere, but we walked around in some of the restaurants, and of course we all saw the Arc de Triumph, which is a famous place. No, I would've liked to have been done a lot more traveling, and then when I did get up to Liege, Belgium where I worked in after the war like that I went with Tucker to England because she had these relatives in England like that, but we only went to their

house and the only heating that they have in the house when you go to England like that at that time, most English people didn't have centralized heating so they had fireplaces otherwise you froze. You went to bed, you know; put a lot of clothes on like that because the rest of the house is not heated. It's just mainly fireplaces and outhouses. You know, we're spoiled like that because a lot of these countries that's the way people lived. The British all lived that way at that time. I figured I'd go to Britain and I go to, you know, Tucker's relatives' house it'd be a real fancy house. Here I'm freezing.

MARRAPODE: Freezing cold and had to go to the outhouse.

BERGER: Outhouse. In the morning like that was a pitcher of water on the table to wash your hands.

MARRAPODE: Wow. Were you able to write home a lot?

BERGER: Oh yes. My mother saved a lot of the letters and I have them in the basement.

MARRAPODE: Did you write mostly to your parents?

BERGER: My kids, to everybody. In fact what happened was that my father felt so sorry for me that he had a woman because my father was dealing with different people in real-estate, and he decided besides being a, you know, civil engineer for the Army he also was in real-estate. This one gal that worked in the office he says, "You know I think you should write to my daughter," and he says, "She sounds so sort of lonely like that," so she started writing me letters. She lived on the Westside of Chicago, and I wrote her back and I looked her up and I became the maid of honor at her wedding and my husband was the best man.

MARRAPODE: Really? And it all just started because your dad thought you...

BERGER: I was lonely.

MARRAPODE: Was there anything you avoided writing home about or you didn't want to share with your parents?

BERGER: I don't think I ever shared; I never shared about being raped. I very seldom talked about it. I didn't tell my kids until years and years later. I have three sons. I don't think I, I only talked about nice things. I don't think I talked, you know, about things that are so traumatic like that, that you start writing it and you start eating it, you know, thinking about it a

whole lot then you start writing, it stays too much in your body like that, and I wanted to forget about those things. So this discussion group that I go to today like that I've been going to it quite a long time since my husband passed away. I did other things but then when my husband died I decided quitting a lot of the stuff that he and I did together and I joined the Navy Center and this discussion group they talk about all kinds of things. I never told them anything about my Army experience or about anything like that. All of a sudden yesterday one woman that knows me from before and she remembers that one time I told somebody that I was in the Army so then she says, "I think there's somebody in this class that's going to go to the Pritzker Center," so then the woman that leads the class she says, "Who is it?" I said, "It's me," she says, "How come you haven't talked about it, Ruth?" I don't talk about it. They didn't know I was in the Army. They didn't know any of my experiences like that. If somebody asked me that I start telling them otherwise...

MARRAPODE: You don't bring it up?

BERGER: I don't. I don't bring it up. I'm proud that I was in the Army, but then, you know, when I start bringing it up then I bring up a lot of things that I don't want to remember.

MARRAPODE: It was a pretty emotionally difficult time, you know, serving in the military for you?

BERGER: Sure, but then again I for some reason like that must I don't know why because my mother didn't want me to do any of these kind of things, for some reason I did a lot of things like that to overcome, you know, now that someone rode me, you know, so when I got married I decided to do something different because I worked, you know, like I told you at a jailhouse and correction. When I was at the Evanston Hospital when they weren't paying too much money they had a polio epidemic, I volunteered for the polio epidemic. I have to show you this. Now that's my brother, my twin brother. Now that's one of my gals that I worked with on the polio floor, that's the respirator. There's a picture of me because we used hot pads on patients so I, my shoes, I didn't polish my shoes. I'm really up here. These are the hot pad machines and we gave everybody hot pad machines, hot pads because at that time people that were paralyzed the doctors didn't bring a hot pads but I did, so the doctor that worked on the floor there said that we have to give people hot pads so that their muscles will stay in shape so that's, you know, make them work, be able to work

somehow like that so we gave everybody hot pads, yes, but see now you don't have respirators.

MARRAPODE: Yes, the iron lung.

BERGER: Yes, you don't have iron lungs anymore today, and then the doctor that worked on the floor like that he knew I was, this is a cartoon that I wrote because when I worked at the hospital they opened up and they said that the can't be credited unless they open up a coronary care so I worked at a coronary care and resuscitating the people, so this I did a cartoon of me resuscitating people, but, I liked doing all those kinds of things because when I worked in the hospital I said oh, you know, you can take this course and work in something revolutionary, and one day they said, "You can work in the ER," I said, "Oh okay just tell me what I have to learn and I'll work in the ER," so I worked in the ER for a while. I worked five years in intensive coronary care, but I said to myself like I just can't let this Army business ruin my life. I got to get in all kinds of things like that. So, but when I worked on the polio floor there was a doctor there. He says, you know, "You do cartoons, Ruth. I got to keep these patients awake. On top of that, writing something here but while you're here giving tracheotomy patients that have bulbar polio when they're in a respirator, when they're in a respirator here, and then it's, you know, it pushes the lungs and if they're paralyzed which bulbar polio paralyzes the mucus here like that, and if you don't do a tracheotomy they'll drown in their own phlegm," so then he said, "Well I'm going to take some of your cartoons." He had taken some of my cartoons. I had all these cartoons, the only one I saved was this, the only one I saved was this one, and he photographed them to keep the doctors awake, and then he said, "I want you to draw me something," so I, where the hell is it, he had me draw me this, this thing here and he didn't like what I drew. I drew it about 10 times and I said, "I'm not going to draw it anymore."

MARRAPODE: This is...

BERGER: This is it.

MARRAPODE: This nautical guy here?

BERGER: Yes, I drew it because he knew I was a cartoonist like that.

MARRAPODE: Yes.

BERGER: This is on why you do tracheotomies on patients that are on respirators when they have bulbar polio. Here they'll drown and here they won't.

MARRAPODE: Yeah.

BERGER: I just felt like that that I had to get into all kinds of things like that even though like when my national organization. My husband and I decided we're just going to have to join an organization not do nothing like that try to do something real helpful so we worked at the resale shop and we did all kinds of volunteer work, but when he died and I hurt my knee that I said, "I'm going to just try to enjoy myself now," but otherwise I always was trying to get into something.

MARRAPODE: After the war obviously you stayed in the medical industry and you stayed kept doing medical care and nursing. Can you tell me about when the war ended, when V-E Day came and...?

BERGER: Well it, the V-E Day, the article here, if you read I mention that we were coming back, we were on the hospital train and I think we emptied out some patients and then we're coming back to go into Paris like that, and all of a sudden we hear all kinds of yelling and it was V-E Day, and I was on the train.

MARRAPODE: Working?

BERGER: Yes, and people were yelling and screaming and everything like that, and then of course when I got back onto the train they said, "Well we're folding up, but you can't go home yet because you don't have enough points," so then they start sending us to all different kinds of hospitals to work till you worked up enough point. Every GI had to do it. If you weren't in long enough like that, then you had to stay in and do something to get to work up enough points to go home.

MARRAPODE: How long did you have to stay?

BERGER: I think I stay because I was in about four or five different hospitals. I said eight that's ridiculous. I wasn't in eight different hospitals. I don't know sometimes I exaggerate. I was in a hospital in Roeland where they had went to cellars where they sold champagnes so I bought champagne, I took it home, and only opened it at my wedding. I was in Liege, Belgium. I was in this hospital where they had all these guys who got syphilis, and I think I was in a couple other hospitals and then all of sudden they told us, you know, "We'll put you on a hospital ship and send you home."

MARRAPODE: They made you work even on the voyage home?

BERGER: Yes! I didn't work though. They had enough nurses like that so I told you I got my food out.

MARRAPODE: Yes, and flew out?

BERGER: Yes.

MARRAPODE: That's kind of a morbid place for a concert.

BERGER: It is.

MARRAPODE: What was it like getting back to the states after you got home?

BERGER: When I got back my folks housed next to me and that was they bought for \$9000 and I slept in the dining room on a cot because my brother slept upstairs because it was only a two bedroom house, and I started going to certain affairs and I when they had dances I had my brothers take me and they had these I think on Wilson Ave too they had places where you danced, you know, dancehalls, so I had my brothers take me. They would take me to Wallflower and then they'd take me home because I, you know, everybody says, "Oh, Ruth," you know, these pictures these look at, "Oh you look so beautiful!" Well I didn't attract men so finally one fair I went to was a Jewish guy that decided that he, his folks owned the Dutch Mills, and he diced that he was going to take me out, but he always called at the last minute, and I don't guys like that, but anyhow I had nobody else to go out with so I went out with him and then one time I went out him when he had another girlfriend so there we are two women and one guy so I didn't date him after that, and then I met some nurse at polio when I was doing the polio work she introduced me to a guy and I dated him and he wasn't Jewish so he was Catholic. We used to go out together and finally I went to visit his home and his mother saw I was Jewish and he didn't date me anymore either.

MARRAPODE: How did you meet your husband?

BERGER: That's what happened. I was at this, I was still real friendly with this girl, you know, that was writing to me, and she said, you know, that she wanted me to be her best man but this was about five or six months after I got home from the service because when I was in the service, let's see, I wasn't 20, I graduated, I must've been 22-23 then I was in the service a couple of years and then when I got home I was 25, and I got married when I was 26, so when I was 25 and I was going out with a couple of

these guys that didn't work out like that then this gal here like that introduced me and had me be, you know ,the matron of honor and then her husband like that was, her husband had a guy to be the best man, that's the one guy. We went to this...

MARRAPODE: You met him at the wedding?

BERGER: At the rehearsal. I met him at the rehearsal on the Westside like that, and he had an old junky car and he took me home and there was air coming through the bottom like that, and my folks were at the rehearsal too, so he told my folks that, "I'm going to take your daughter home," and they were real unhappy because he lived on the Westside like that, but he took me home anyhow. He kept calling me and I kept dating him and everything and then I thought gee, you know, after a while my mother was so unhappy like that that I better not marry him, and then I told you the story about this woman that had polio was on the respirator saw that I was crying, and she said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I just broke up with my boyfriend," she says, "Well then I think you should marry him because you're too unhappy," so when I did call to break it up like that he says, "Well I never liked you," and I told you, "Well I don't love you either," and then when I made up with him he says, "I really did love you," then we got engaged. I don't know. I don't think I ever would've married like that because he was the only that wanted to marry me. This guy, the gentile guy, he wouldn't marry because his parents didn't want me, they saw I was Jewish and this guy that had all of the Dutch Mills candy store, you ever hear of that, do you remember them, the Dutch Mills?

MARRAPODE: Yes.

BERGER: Yes. He was only dating me for a while because here I go on a date with him and he invites another girl. So I said well the heck with him. So when I got engaged like that my mother was real, real mad but I said, "No, that's the guy I want to marry," so then she had to pay for our wedding, and we had our big wedding, invited all our relatives and his relatives. We got married in Evanston on Main Street in Evanston. The place now is a nursing home, but it was at one time a hotel.

MARRAPODE: Do you feel that, well I mean obviously you were a nurse in the service and so later on that career experience probably helped you out and do you feel that helped you get work when you were home?

BERGER: Oh sure, yes.

MARRAPODE: Do you feel that your time in the military helped prepare you for what were you in doing in civilian life?

BERGER: Yeah because at that time like that there was a ton of nurses like that...

MARRAPODE: After the war?

BERGER: After the war we had to work with the Filipino nurses because we didn't train enough nurses and the Filipinos trained too many, so I worked with a lot of Filipino nurses. We also had to have other nurses when I was in training because we didn't never had enough nurses, and the water, and we had to train these gals that were water clerks, empty bedpans and give edemas and stuff like that, so you never had a problem getting a job. For a long time I worked at Evanston Hospital after I got my, after I got married. I think I worked at Evanston Hospital for quite a while before I worked at these jails and then I went back to Evanston Hospital and I worked part time there. Worked my duty and then I used to float around like that and then one item because it was a long time before I had worked in a nursery like that, so they assigned me to work in the nursery and they said, and I went into the nursery, the nursery was completely changed because years ago like that, you know, baby's that were real, real tiny, they died. I'm working in this nursery and all of sudden they have these isolates and they were able to save these little tiny babies and help feed them, and I didn't know how to any of that. I called up the nurse, the head nurse, and I said, "I can't do this," I said, "because," you know, "I'm not trained for it," I said. I said, "Get me back on the floor," I did floor duty. I worked, floated everywhere and worked orthopedic floor, regular floors, and everything.

MARRAPODE: Is there anything for your career, either in the service or after you got out of the Army, that maybe you're most proud of or that you think exemplifies your service?

BERGER: I really was somebody fine; when they want me to talk about the service I'm real proud of my service. I can talk about all kinds of other things like that but when I talk about my service I really feel real good.

MARRAPODE: You're glad that you didn't listen to your mom, and...

BERGER: Yes.

MARRAPODE: You went and joined and went overseas?

BERGER: Yes, that's right, but she didn't want me to be a nurse, she didn't want to me to go overseas, she didn't want me to marry my husband. I'm telling you right now don't let any, anybody ruin your life.

MARRAPODE: Do you think that's a good lesson that maybe future generations can learn from your experiences?

BERGER: Sure, I tell everybody, yes. It's a wonderful experience I think, I really like that, she brought somebody over here like that, and she heard I don't, I tell everybody, I don't know where she heard like that that I was a nurse in the service like that, so she, "Ruth," she said, "do you have any information?" so, you know, I went over and had this stuff copied, that's what you had got me.

MARRAPODE: Yes.

BERGER: I had to go to Office Max to copy some of this stuff like that and send it to you, and then when I sent in I says to Charlotte, I says, you know, "I really think they want people that were out there killing," you know, "Germans or killing Japanese," like that. I didn't hear from you for a long time. I sent it in about three or four months ago. I said to Charlotte, "Oh they want people that are just," when I got the phone call I nearly dropped dead.

MARRAPODE: No, we want lifesavers too. Those are kind of important stories to hear.

BERGER: Yes. Well I definitely think that I, you know, that all these GI's, the majority of them, like that because we gave penicillin and sulfa and, you know, and watched them like that that we saved a lot of those guys because several times we had people a couple times we had a Russian and Polish person like that and they had gangrene because of, you know, and we didn't, you know, we were able to prevent it. And our guys were pretty clean guys too like that because a couple of times we had some soldiers from other armies that were filthy and smelled. You couldn't get near them; our GI's never smelled. If they had to like that they would take their helmet, soap, water, and wash themselves, that's what we did.

MARRAPODE: Was it common to see soldiers from other Allied Armies in your train?

BERGER: Yes, because even in Israel now they're taking care of Arabs. I just read in my gossip magazine they're taking care of Arabs when they have this, what's this gal when they do a marrow transplant?

MARRAPODE: I'm not sure.

BERGER: You have to have certain...

MARRAPODE: A marrow, a bone marrow transplant?

BERGER: Yes, you have to have a certain DNA.

MARRAPODE: A certain blood-type.

BERGER: Yes, or not even a blood-type I think you have to have...

MARRAPODE: Then it would be more specific?

BERGER: Yes, something to match, and now they're doing it for the Arabs besides being the Jews. You know this one woman on television that was instrumental getting a lot of people to donate for bone marrow transplant. Did you hear about her?

MARRAPODE: No.

BERGER: She's a reporter on one of the morning programs.

MARRAPODE: She needed a transplant?

BERGER: She got it because she had breast cancer from the treatment she developed a bone cancer, and she needed a bone transplant, and you had to have her sister is a perfect match so because it got all over the news and every program like that because this gal is very well known like that broadcaster, and now all of a sudden all over the country people are donating samples, so that somebody can be a match and save their life.

MARRAPODE: That's a pretty big advancement in medical technology since, I guess, since the war when you're just in there issuing penicillin and changing bandages. Things have changed a lot in the medical field since then.

BERGER: They say that the war even now has made a tremendous advances like that the way they treat these guys, get them right out the battlefield, up to helicopters right away, so and, you know, you better get them out of here. They've written books about it, yeah.

MARRAPODE: Is there anything else you'd like to share or anything you thought that I would ask you about that I didn't? Okay well thank you for coming in and sharing your experiences with me, and thank you for the service to the country. I really appreciate it.