

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH LOIS R. MANNING

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Jessica Ondusko: This begins an interview with Mrs. Lois Manning on Friday, February 29, 2008, in Annandale, New Jersey, with Jessica Ondusko and ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you so much, Mrs. Manning, for having us here today.

Lois Manning: You're welcome.

SH: If you do not mind, for the record, could you tell us where and when you were born?

LM: I was born in western Pennsylvania, a small [town], on a farm with an address of Rimersburg, and our names were Rimer. ... I was a Rimer, and ... I was born on March the 6th of 1922 and I was the second of five children and lived on the farm until I started nursing school, and should I continue?

SH: Yes. What we will do at this point is ask you to talk a little bit about your father, his name, his family background, if you would.

LM: Well, my father, Robert Rimer, had grown up in that house. He was born nearby on another farm, but he grew up there and, his parents lived there, and when he married my mother, who was a schoolteacher in a one-room school, why, they built an extra room on the side of the house. ... We just had two rooms downstairs and the other had a couple bedrooms upstairs, where we were raised, and our grandparents, as long as they lived, and they had a daughter that was [living there for] awhile before she got married, ... were on the other side of the house, but, [at] any rate, I helped on the farm. I milked cows, did all the things that you have to do, back then, and we didn't have electricity, of course. We had gas. There was a gas place; we got our gas from a neighbor and, apparently, the two neighbors and us had managed to dig this well and we just kept [the line open]. It was free then, for us, as long as we kept the line open, but, [at] any rate, ... well, I had, eventually, two brothers and two sisters, the older sister and thee, went all the way down to the younger sister, fifteen years younger than I, who had a very interesting life, because she developed polio. ... When she was in the hospital for communicable diseases in Pittsburgh, Dr. Jonas Salk, [creator of the polio vaccine], was in the basement, doing his vaccine work. ... With parental permission, he was testing the efficacy of it on these children and, of course, she knew him very well, and my parents, too, and then, as he would get the vaccine developed, he would give it himself, you know, to them, and so, my parents [consented]. ... I could have had the vaccine, too, before the world knew about it, but we were 350 miles away from there [laughter] and the children were small and the roads were terrible.

SH: You said that the town was Rimersburg.

LM: Yes.

SH: How long had your family been there? Was it named for your family, I assume?

LM: It was named for, I think, great, great, great, I'm not sure whether it was more than four greats, uncles that settled the town, and it was seven miles from where we lived. ... As the town

was being developed, ... there were two stores and one family, by the name of Pinks, wanted the town called Pinksville and the Rimers wanted it called, ... this uncle, wanted it called Rimersburg, and, apparently, in his store, he gave away more free liquor than the Pinks and swung the election. [laughter] So, it was named Rimersburg, and we celebrated [the] two hundredth anniversary. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

LM: Okay.

SH: Please, continue. You were talking about the celebration that just took place.

LM: Yes. Oh, well, in the celebration of the founding of Rimersburg, the Rimer Family rode in in like a covered wagon. [laughter] So, that's about all I remember about it. It was quite a parade, but that was way back, when I was still home, [laughter] but, [at] any rate, well, there's nothing [else]. ...

SH: Where did your mother's family come from and what was her maiden name?

LM: Well, Mother's maiden name was Bashline and ... her grandmother was a Logue, L-O-G-U-E, and they were all from Pennsylvania, and you probably want to know about Grandfather Rimer. They were always from that area and the farm was owned, I think it was just; it was started by the Rimers, ... all kind [of] farming. ... We had a lot of different grains. It's a depressed area now, because there's no industry there, and we were, like, as I said, seven miles out of town and we sold eggs or, sometimes, ... traded them for groceries and we had milk pickup, you know. ... I guess there was some grain sold, but we had all of the different, usual animals, and I did a lot of milking and everything, and working with horses, you know, no tractors, as long as I was at home, growing up, and went to this one-room school, which was a mile-and-a-half away.

SH: You had talked about your mother having gone to normal school to be a teacher. Was she from a big family?

LM: She was, like, ... [one] of a family of ten and, from that area, I mean, and from Pennsylvania, not that far away, and she went to this normal school, but, at the time, if you were a pretty good student, you could just teach after you finished school. ... Then, they eventually got school directors, and so on, and hired people. ... I think she got something like forty dollars a month, and part of her contract said, "And furnish your own kindling," because she had to build the fires and everything, and ... getting there was something, because she couldn't live home and walk to school. So, she had to pay board. So, it wasn't some big moneymaking scheme, [laughter] but Mother was a schoolteacher right to the end, and instilled a love of education in all of us.

SH: You did say, though, that, back then, since they did not hire married schoolteachers ...

LM: Right.

SH: As soon as she married ...

LM: Well, yes, ... I'm not even exactly sure how they met, but they grew up probably six miles apart, something like that, ... back there in the one farm and another farm. ... My mother was the one who was the planner and the doer [laughter] and the manager, ... but she instilled a love of education in all of us.

JO: Did you have any particular interests or subjects that you were drawn towards?

LM: Well, funny you say that. When I was five years old, I developed what is known as mastoiditis, [the inflammation of the mastoid bone located behind the ear], and we had, of course, family doctors, and so on. ... We had an uncle that was a doctor down in Pittsburgh, eighty miles away, and, of course, the only way to get there would be to get on the train, you know, because you really couldn't take your Model T or whatever you had that far. ... [At] any rate, when I was five years old, I had mastoiditis and I was put in the hospital and my uncle operated on me and did a mastoidectomy, [removal of the mastoid bone]. ... We were Protestant, but I was in a Catholic hospital and, of course, Mother stayed with me, down [there]. We'd gone down on the train and the nuns, I was so impressed with the nuns, and I remember Mother being so embarrassed; I asked this one nun how old she was. [laughter] ... I'm not sure what she said, but, [at] any rate, ... I decided, when I was five years old, I wanted to be a nurse, and I've never changed, never, which is not what happens today, not at all. [laughter] ... I didn't change and the interesting thing, to me, [was] that I never tried to influence my children, but both my daughters ended up being nurses.

JO: You said that you were Protestant. Was religion an important part of the community?

LM: Religion? Well, ... Catholicism and Protestantism, there was a big divide there. I mean, you just [did not cross that], and Mother thought the hospital was great, but she wasn't [Catholic], and my uncle who operated was not Catholic. ... Whenever I grew up, I mean, we never [crossed the line]. At that time, Protestants could not go into a Catholic, you know, service or anything like that, and vice versa, I guess, but I just know that we [did not]. ... When I went into nursing, I was in the dorm there, it's connected with the hospital, Mercy Hospital and the Mercy Hospital was the [one the] nuns were running, and I would go to, there was always Mass every morning that you can go to, but I always went to morning prayers at six-thirty. I'm not sure Mother thought that was such a great idea, [laughter] but I did, and then, well, [to jump] ahead to where someone was coming to see me from the service, ... Mother wanted to know what his family was like and what religion he was and I didn't know. ... So, Mother had another big worry. [laughter] It turned out he was Protestant.

SH: Was your family active in the Methodist church there in Rimersburg?

LM: Well, it's one of those with the two doors, you know, the women in one side and the men on the other, ... and the poor minister had five different churches. ... The church in town, it was the home church. ... His parsonage was beside that, and then, every Sunday at eleven o'clock, that church had a service, but the other two, the other Sundays, he would preach two sermons.

So, every other Sunday, we had a service, preaching, but, every Sunday, we'd have Sunday school. ... The poor guy, when we got married, he had to preach three sermons and marry us, and these are all outlying in all different [areas]. It's just a wonder that he made it ... and we couldn't say when the wedding was going to be. It was at home, ... but my mother wrote letters, there wasn't any invitation or anything, and said that, "In the forenoon," [laughter] that Lois was being married.

SH: I love that, "In the forenoon." I think we should reinstitute that.

LM: Yes, it was.

SH: Takes the pressure off the bride. [laughter]

LM: You've got that right, and, of course, for seating, out in the front lawn, we went to the [laughter] undertaker place in town and borrowed seating, [laughter] on Saturday, for the wedding and, of course, they had to return it. [laughter]

SH: Prayed for good weather, right. [laughter]

LM: Yes, the night before, there was a thundershower. It was pretty bad and we had some sort of a rehearsal, but without the minister, but, anyway, the next day was very nice.

SH: We kind of jumped ahead.

LM: I know.

SH: That is great, though. That is what we are here for. You said you did not know for sure how your mother and father met, but your grandparents, your Rimer grandparents, lived with you.

LM: We lived with them, the other half of the house, you know. There was a hall in the middle and we had two rooms on this side and they had three rooms on that side, and then, the center hall was where the steps went up to the upstairs. ...

SH: Were you able to see your Bashline grandparents often?

LM: Well, we didn't see Mother's father, because he had died many years before, and one of her brothers had died, too, but we were able to get together frequently, with reunions, with the rest of the ten children that were living, and their families, and the Rimers, they were actually nearby, except one, ... but the family, it was always lots of families and cousins. ... In the winter, we'd entertain our neighbors, you know, for dinner, you know, because they didn't have so much to do during the day, and so on. We'd have one of them or two of them [for dinner].

SH: Can you talk a little bit about how the Depression affected your family and that area?

LM: The Depression, I don't think I ever realized there was a Depression, and the family didn't either, because we had our own meat, we had our own vegetables and fruits, and we canned and dried things. ... At that time, ... the '30s, you know, I was in school and I really didn't know, and farming [families] were given more rations, enough rations of gas, you know; well, later. ... Farming had a little more gas than others, but, [at] any rate, I didn't really realize there was a Depression, is what I'm saying. You know, folks talk about that era, in the '30s, early '30s; didn't make any impression on me at all.

SH: How did someone in western rural Pennsylvania get their news? As a young girl growing up, what were the big news items that you remember?

LM: Well, the way they got their news was the daily newspaper, you know, and, I mean, I'm not sure whether it was a daily or just a weekly, because ... it was RFD, [rural free delivery], you know. We were on a rural route and I remember the first time we had a radio. My younger brother, who was six years younger than I, was in his playpen, and I guess it was [President] Coolidge or [President] Hoover, but, [at] any rate, he was having his inauguration speech. ... Well, my brother was born in '28, so, it was about '30, ... whoever that was, ... but, of course, they always voted, and so on. [Editor's Note: President Herbert Hoover was elected in 1928 and took office in 1929.] ... The voting places were in schools, and so, ... that's where I first voted, too.

JO: Do you remember your family's political feelings, any candidates that they favored?

SH: Or did not favor?

LM: No, no, I don't think so. ... One thing I remember about the news is getting a newspaper, one time, and we all knew who [Charles A.] Lindbergh was and Lindbergh, the kidnapping, that's what I remember, ... bringing a newspaper down and the baby was kidnapped. That was '33, wasn't it? and I never dreamed I'd get to live near Flemington. [Editor's Note: The trial of Bruno Hauptmann, accused (and subsequently found guilty) of kidnapping and murdering famed aviator Charles A. Lindbergh's son, took place at the Hunterdon County Courthouse in Flemington, New Jersey, in January and February of 1935.]

SH: Where the trial took place.

LM: Yes.

SH: You had said that you knew from five years old that you wanted to be a nurse. In your one-room schoolhouse, did your teacher encourage you with this idea, that you would go on to school?

LM: No. We were more thinking about high school at that time, you know, and I don't ever remember anybody talking about what they wanted to do when they grew up. ... Of course, the teacher; did you experience one-room schools, too?

SH: Yes.

LM: Yes, but, I mean, all eight grades in one room and one teacher, and walk to school, furnish your kindling and all that.

SH: I did not walk to school. I was about nine miles from my school. [laughter]

LM: Okay. Well, whenever we got through, I said we were a mile-and-a-half, when we got through eighth grade, ... we had to take an eighth grade examination, to see if you're ready for high school. ... The two boys in our class, of course, never went to high school. The township would pay your tuition, but you had to find a way to get there. So, my sister and I, we were in the same grade, ... Mother and Dad, well, the first year, we stayed at my mother's mother's place, which was about a mile from school, which is about seven miles from the house, and so, she would take us, on Monday morning, ... to our grandmother's place, and then, we'd walk in to school ... for the first year, and, after that, we rented. I think, it was [that] we paid this guy, he lived next-door, he was a relative of a relative, and we had a bedroom that we had upstairs and had the run of the house. ... He was a widower, and so, no refrigerator or anything. So, that was interesting, because ... we had our own bedroom upstairs, as I said, and shared the bathroom, but, when we would go on Monday morning, ... from the farm, we'd take a gallon of milk, ... because there wasn't any fridge, and then, a dozen eggs and potatoes and things like that, and some canned meat, and so on, and so forth, and the first night, we always had what we called "salmon soup," which was, like, a quart of milk with a can of salmon. ... The salmon turned out to be mackerel, because it was cheaper, and then, we would have that the first night for dinner, and we stayed until Friday night, and then, the next day, the milk was sour. So, we always had pancakes on Tuesday night and had a can of sausage, you know, we opened up for that, and then, on Wednesday, we would have, the milk was sour, of course, and everything, so, ... we would open a can of beef and we would have some beef and cook some potatoes from home, carrots or something like that, and then, on Thursday, we had the leftovers, [which] was still okay; well, it's a wonder. [laughter] ... Then, Friday night, we were home, and breakfast was, you could always get by with just some ... homemade bread sandwich, you know, and school was interesting.

JO: What did you do for fun as a child, besides school and working on the farm? Did you have any activities that you did?

LM: Well, there was, at one time, ... someone tried to get a Girl Scout thing going. The most I remember about the Scouting was that we had to make some sort of a something out of a vegetable or something, and then, eat it. It was like a salad, and I took a big carrot and scooped a lot of the insides out, I don't know what I put inside, but, [at] any rate, can you imagine me eating that carrot, the bigger carrot? [laughter] ... I remember being at a 4-H thing at a neighbor's and ... they were kind of on a hill and the porch was high, and it's the first time I ever had Jell-O and whipped cream, and I'll never forget that. [laughter]

SH: It was such a new thing.

LM: It was new, very new, ... but that's, you know, the most I can [recall], the things that pop into my memory.

SH: Did you belong to 4-H?

LM: Yes, there was a [4-H]. It wasn't very active and it didn't last very long, because they couldn't [get enough members?], and you had to get there. ... You know, your parents couldn't be taking you here and there, and everybody lived in a farm and we were far, and I could walk to that place.

SH: How did you and your sister wind up in the same grade in high school?

LM: Well, ... because I was [born] within ten days, she was born March 16th, the very next March, on the 6th, I was born, [we were born within a year of each other], ... when she was, we didn't have kindergarten, five, they kept her back, "At six, she's going to start, okay?" At six, and I was five, I ended up, I was in the hospital, so, we didn't have [school], and, you know, she quit through the rest of the year. They didn't want her walking in the snow and everything. So, the next year, we started, and then, she was six and I was five and, when we ... went to first grade and the next year, we were in third grade, the teacher passed us. ...

SH: Okay, I was just curious.

LM: Yes, and so, ... she went on to be a teacher and I went on to be a nurse.

SH: You talked about your living arrangements in high school. Did your younger siblings have to go through the same thing?

LM: Okay. ... The next one in age in our family was a boy, and he walked and rode a bike some, for the seven miles. ... He was playing football, but, in his second year, there wasn't any bus, see, but, in his second year, he was stricken with osteomyelitis, [an infection of the bone or bone marrow], and he never got back to school. So, the myelitis really were very terrible on our family, because he was crippled all his life ... from osteomyelitis, and there wasn't any penicillin, and ... my sister had poliomyelitis and she's the one ... that met Dr. Salk and got to know him. ...

SH: How did you pick Mercy Hospital?

LM: Because that's where I had been when I had [the] mastoidectomy and that's where this uncle, the doctor, was on the staff, even though he wasn't Catholic. So, that's why I wanted to go there, and it didn't cost a lot, you know, and my parents, of course, then had my sister in college. It was like a state teachers' college, or whatever they called them then, and so, she had to be, I was going to say billeted, but she had to pay rent, but it was very low.

SH: Were you aware of the developments that were going on in Europe and around the world or were you pretty insulated in western Pennsylvania?

LM: Oh, well, whenever I was in nursing, I knew that when I finished nursing, what I wanted to do, and so, that's when I became [an Army nurse]. I knew I wanted to be a nurse, ... and I

became a nurse, and whenever I finished, why, I went in ... right as soon as I got my RN. I finished in '43.

SH: Yes, because you went into nursing in 1939.

LM: That's when I graduated high school, in '39, and then, after that, I went in. ... I had to be eighteen to go in. So, I was seventeen. So, I had a year [that] I had to wait to go into, and I worked at home. I took care [of a neighbor], got a small amount of money. A neighbor had cancer and it was only half a mile from our [home]. It was our closest neighbor, and so, I went and I helped them. You know, I'd cook and clean and help milk and everything, you know, ... that year, and so, I was [doing that]. I didn't save much. [laughter] Well, there was no way to spend it, either, out there.

SH: Did your family take you to ...

LM: Pittsburgh. No, I'd get on a train.

SH: Did you get the train?

LM: Yes, I'd get the train.

SH: How close was the train to Rimersburg?

LM: Well, we were seven miles out of Rimersburg and you had to go about, probably, fifteen miles to get a train to Pittsburgh, ... and then, I didn't get home very much, either, you know, just for vacation or something.

SH: In nursing school, you just went straight through. There were no, like they have now, semesters. Is that true, that you just kept going?

LM: Oh, no, right around the clock. We had a little time off in the summer, you know.

SH: Did you?

LM: Yes. No, ... it wasn't constant, for, well, just a vacation time, but not like it was ... in school, I mean, in grade school and high school.

SH: Did nursing specialize then or was it just general?

LM: It was general.

SH: How many women were in the program?

LM: Well, there weren't any men. [laughter]

SH: I know.

LM: No, at the nursing school, I think there were thirty or forty of us in the class, you know, and we stayed in the nurses' residence there, to go to take the course.

SH: When do you first remember hearing about Pearl Harbor?

LM: Well, I'll tell you, we were going to; I had an aunt and uncle and their daughter was four days difference in age from me. Our birthdays are this week, but, anyway, ... they had come up, this aunt and uncle, to visit, like, over a weekend, and the Sunday, we were going back, to Pittsburgh. ... They had picked me up at the nurses' residence, in their car, and we were going into Pittsburgh, and on this Sunday evening, and I see this, I can still see this, a newsboy selling newspapers and [I] see the headline, "War," you know. It was that Sunday that it started and I was, you know, ... just amazed and, of course, from then on, you know, ... I'd listen to a radio, if someone had a radio. We didn't have our own or anything like that, and so, that's how I knew about the war.

SH: When the draft had started in 1940, were any of the young men and cousins taken?

LM: Oh, many, many. My brother would have been old enough, but he was ill.

SH: After Pearl Harbor, were you recruited to go into the Army Nursing Corps?

LM: No. They had Red Cross people come and talk with us and they, of course, were encouraging us to sign up. ... Of course, I don't know whether it was wrong or not, but I didn't even consult my parents about what I would do, and I knew that, when I was finished, that's where I was going. ...

JO: It made you decide that this was what you were going to do.

LM: Yes. Well, I decided when I was five years old that I was going to be a nurse. ... So, I just went and signed up.

SH: How many of the forty or so signed up?

LM: ... In my class? As far as I know, I was the only one.

SH: Really? Why do you think you made that decision?

LM: You've got me.

SH: What influenced you?

LM: I know. ... In a way, maybe I wanted to travel, ... get out into the world, you know, ... but I'd always decided, when I was five years old, I was going to be a nurse, and then, ... when this was happening, I knew that we were needed and I also knew that nobody else in the family was able to serve, and so, that's one reason I stepped in.

JO: What was your parents' reaction when you told them?

LM: They accepted it. They never really tried to change [my mind], not that they would have, but ... they didn't. Mother, I think; you know, they had the star in the window and the whole deal, you know, and they were always very supportive. ...

SH: Did you make the decision to join the Army Nursing Corps prior to graduation?

LM: It's possible that I had that in the back of my mind, because the Red Cross people were coming and talking to us and they were encouraging [us to join].

SH: Did you know of other young men your age that had gone into the military?

LM: Oh, yes, there was a class. We had the biggest class in the one-room school. There were five of us. Well, the one didn't go the whole year, so, it was only four of us, and they, of course, were drafted, and so on, and so forth. I knew from talk around the home, but I just had wanted to do my part, I think.

SH: We talked about rationing. That had already been put into effect before you went into the Army.

LM: Yes.

SH: Did that affect your ability to get home on vacations and things like that?

LM: Oh, you mean because of the gas. Well, it was an awful ride down there in a car, you know, and so, they didn't come down very much. ... Well, they didn't come down at all, except to take me. ...

SH: Did they come to your graduation?

LM: ... No.

SH: Did you have a capping?

LM: Yes. Well, they had such a thing, but they still have capping, even though they don't wear caps, or they used to; maybe fifteen, twenty years ago, they did. I don't know. Mother and, of course, they were; my sister ... had become a teacher and I became a nurse, but it was just too much for them to come all the way down for that, and then, my brother had become, ... while I was in nursing [school], he came in with osteomyelitis and he had pneumonia and jaundice and this bulge in his hip, you know. They did an I&D, incision and drainage, and then, they didn't have anything to fight it with, so, it just spread all the way down his leg, and he was ... bedfast for a couple of years and they eventually ... took him home and everything. My poor parents, they were [taxed], between osteomyelitis and poliomyelitis, really, and then, educating us. ...

SH: Were you able to be your brother's nurse when he was in Pittsburgh?

LM: Well, I was working nights ... when he was brought in, and they didn't have ambulances, so, they had to use hearses, a hearse. ... One of the nuns, the supervisor, I guess, that night, came to where I was working and said that, "Your brother and mother are on their way down for the pneumonia ward." He had pneumonia, see, and he was put in isolation. We had such a thing as a pneumonia ward, and so, I finished my tour that next morning and I went over to where he was and everybody was in oxygen tents, you know. There were just four beds there and I walked in and looked at all of them. I didn't recognize my brother. I'd seen him, like, two, three weeks before, when I was home, but he was so jaundiced and lost so much weight and everything, I mean, he [really changed]. ... So, I finally identified him, and so on, and he ... eventually got out of the pneumonia ward, got over the pneumonia, but he was still [ill], and they did an incision and drainage, and so on, and it was really just drained and drained and drained and he was in the hospital for months.

SH: Was he kept in isolation with the drainage?

LM: No, no. He was in the pneumonia ward because of the pneumonia, and so, they had him out on the floor, and Mother and Dad, of course, were paying for all this, you know. ... They had to mortgage the farm, eventually, between the osteomyelitis and poliomyelitis that my sister had, later. I don't know how they paid for all that, really.

JO: Later on, I think you mentioned this in the notes you wrote for your grandchildren, he was not able to get penicillin, because it was diverted for the war effort.

LM: Well, it hadn't been available, and then, when it was first [made available], I was giving it to the soldiers ... right after it came out, and then, he was able to get it. ... They had given him sulfa drugs [antibacterial drugs] and everything, but nothing was working and ... it had [spread] all down his leg and he had foot drop, because he was in the bed for so long. Oh, man, it was so sad, and, one Thanksgiving, I was home, you know, when I was still at nursing [school]. I'd gone home with my aunt and uncle, and I'll never forget that, and he was in a coma that day. We thought it was it. He hadn't had anything to eat or drink or wasn't aroused or anything. ... We were eating supper and we heard a noise and we went over, he was in a bed in the other side of the house, and he came to and I don't know what happened. ... Of course, he lived on and on and on, like that. ... As I said, I was giving penicillin and, ... at that point, I didn't realize the specifics about the, you know, what was going on with staph [*staphylococcus aureus*], and so on, and so forth, ... but, as soon as he was able to get that, why, and my mother gave it to him and everything, so, he started [healing]. He was able to heal up the infection. It was a miracle, really.

SH: How much longer was he able to live then?

LM: ... After he was done with the infection, you know, and so on, and he had to have surgery for the foot drop, ... one leg was shorter than the other, because of that infection, and he elected to have the other leg shortened, ... and that didn't work so well. ... Oh, he just had surgery after surgery after surgery, and, eventually, was able to, with therapy, to stand. ... His gait was really,

I mean, very, very awkward, ... but he was able to get around. ... He didn't have a trade or anything. He hadn't finished high school and they'd given him his diploma, because he was about through, but, anyway, an uncle took ... pity on him and the uncle ... had lost his son in the service and ... taught him the trade of welding, and he was able to do it, you know, with his limp, and so on, and he did that. ... There was a lot of strip-mining and the big machinery, and so on. So, he would do [that], and he ... got so [that] he could drive a car. ... He even came out here, after I got married, I think once, you know. ... He wasn't driving, but somebody had him in a car, but, I mean, not that he couldn't have driven, but it was sad.

SH: Amazing, what a will.

LM: Yes, I know. The myelitises really were very bad for my family.

SH: To back up, can you talk us through how you came to sign up for the Army, where they sent you, that kind of thing, if you would?

LM: Well, I signed up. There was someone [who] had come [and] talked to us ... about, I guess, the need, and, as far as I know, I'm the only one out of the class that really listened, and so, I went down and signed up. Oh, you had to pass a physical, you know, and so on, and so forth, and so, I finished the nursing [school]. ...

SH: This was in May of 1943.

LM: Yes, and, [at] any rate, I know about May, but, [at] any rate, I went and signed up and ... I was in. ...

SH: Oh, I see, because you said you had to wait, January of 1944, it says you enlisted.

LM: Yes, right, yes. Well, in the end of '43, ... I had finished [nursing school]. I had to wait for my RN, see, that's what it was, yes, and then, as soon as I got my RN, [I went in], and the folks wondered if I consulted my family. I didn't. I said I was going, and so, that's what happened, but they never really objected or anything like that. ...

SH: Did you stay in Pittsburgh while you waited to get your RN? Were you working?

LM: Yes, I was working. ... As a graduate nurse, you don't make quite as much [money]. Of course, we didn't make hardly anything anyway, but, anyway, until I got my RN, and then, as soon as I got the RN, I could go.

SH: Did you come back to Rimersburg or did you do everything right there in Pittsburgh, your physical and everything?

LM: I did it down there, yes. I did it down there. I went and signed up and had the physical, and my hearing wasn't [good]. Well, it's about the same as it is today, because of that surgery, ... but, you know, ... they weren't too "GI" about it.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Please, continue telling us about your induction, how you got there, your uniforms, and so forth.

LM: Okay. Well, ... what happened [was], when I signed up, ... I was to get down to Fort Meade, in Maryland, and so, I was put on a train in Pittsburgh, where I was, you know, nursing, and I got the train and went down to Fort Meade and I was supposed to have six weeks of training, of basic training for nurses. That's where the nurses' training was. Well, it wasn't even two weeks and they said they needed nurses, two young nurses, to flesh out an outfit that was coming off maneuvers. It was on maneuvers in Camp Forrest, Tennessee, and they wanted to know and they wanted the younger folks. ... So, what happened is, I volunteered and this other gal volunteered, and so, we were put on a train, ... down there in Maryland, and sent ... out to Camp Forrest, Tennessee, and I'll never forget, because we didn't have very much basic training. We had a little drilling, and so on, but that was about it, and we're put on this train to go out there and it was an overnight train and I know, when it came supertime, that I went out to the car where ... we eat and I ate and came back and sat down. ... Right on the tails of me coming, here's this guy coming from the dining car, and he ... said I didn't pay my bill and I said, "Well, I thought the Army was taking care of it," you know, "because they sent me out, put me on the train." "Well, no;" so, I had to pay him, the first time I ever tried to get away with a meal, [laughter] but, [at] any rate, I don't remember whether I ever got reimbursed. [laughter]

SH: The Army still may owe you.

LM: Yes, right, maybe, doesn't owe me too much.

JO: Was that the farthest west you had ever been?

LM: Oh, yes, that is true, and one of the reasons [I volunteered was], maybe in the back of my mind, you know, because I thought I'd like to see some of the world and the fact that this outfit was going to be shipped overseas. [Editor's Note: Mrs. Manning imitates how she raised her hand to volunteer.]

SH: "Pick me." [laughter]

LM: And a lot of them, you know, they had their hands folded. They didn't want to have [any] part of it. ...

SH: In those first two weeks, what were you doing?

LM: Yes, drilling.

SH: Drilling, in a barracks.

LM: Well, yes, we were marching outside, but we were in a barracks. ... As far as uniforms, we were issued, like, fatigues, and so on, and we had a dress uniform, ... which I really never wore,

because, you know, we got sent overseas right away. I got there and they were just coming off maneuvers and we were put on another train and we went to Camp Kilmer, and then, a night or two later, we were put ... under blackout, you know, put on an English ship ... to go to Europe. Well, we didn't know where we were going. [laughter] ... Of course, we had to zigzag and get over there, and I'd never been on a ship before, of course. ... We landed in Scotland and we're put on another train and went down to near Liverpool, where we were billeted in English homes, because England was just crammed with servicemen, you know, and so on, before D-Day, and we were in Mrs. (Leashman's?) home, ... this other gal and I. ... She would awaken us every morning, pull back the curtains, the blackout curtains, and bring scones and tea, and so, that was a nice way to be awakened. [laughter] I wouldn't mind that now.

SH: When you left Fort Meade, were you already a lieutenant? What was your rank?

LM: You go in ... as a second lieutenant. Yes, you go in as an officer. I've never been an enlisted person.

SH: Okay, because, sometimes ...

LM: No, I know, well, that's right. ...

SH: Where was the other woman from?

LM: Hazleton, Pennsylvania.

SH: It was two Pennsylvania girls that volunteered.

LM: Right.

SH: What was the name of the group that you were sent to join in Tennessee?

LM: The 106th Evacuation Hospital; 109th, I'm sorry. [laughter]

SH: Okay, thank you, because I saw your shirt. Just for the record, Mrs. Manning is wearing a great sweatshirt with, "109th Evac Hospital," on it.

LM: Yes. ... I wanted to get overseas. ...

SH: Where had the 109th been?

LM: Oh, it's activated in Colorado, near Denver; Colorado Springs, rather. ... We still have reunions. ... There's a younger 109th Evac Hospital. Ours was deactivated after World War II, but we started having reunions then, and then, ... a lot of us were so much older, we're a disappearing breed, you know, [laughter] that the 109th was reactivated as a National Guard outfit in Alabama for the [Persian] Gulf War. ... That didn't last very long and the commanding officer, [Lieutenant Colonel] Clyde [W.] Dutton, whenever he came home, he had heard about the 109th Evac Hospital from World War II and he appeared at our reunion that fall, after the

Gulf War experience, and, now, they started coming to our reunions, which we started having every year. ... Now, they're continuing and they don't allow us to say that we're not having any more reunions.

SH: Good for them.

LM: Yes. So, last year, among the younger 109th, there were only six from World War II. As I said, we're a disappearing breed, and there were three enlisted men and three nurses. The other two nurses claim they would not be able to go this year, but I intend to go, God willing.

SH: God willing, I hope you do.

LM: And that's in Gulf Shores, down in Alabama, which is in August.

SH: After you and your friend arrived on the train, how were you received by those that had already been together and bonded?

LM: Well, we were put into a tent ... with three others. There were five of us in a tent, ... but, [at] any rate, ... two were from Pennsylvania and one was from Massachusetts, and very good friends, very good friends. They were just real pleased to have us. ...

SH: Were you all about the same age?

LM: They were older. They had signed up [earlier], you know. ... I don't know why they signed up or where they signed up. ... Well, there were a couple from [the] Philadelphia area, but there were quite a few from the New England area in that outfit, and in my tent, you know, and so, we stuck together. ... They're all gone now, but me, the ones that were in that outfit, of the nurses.

SH: When you got to Tennessee and you reported in, and then ...

LM: Yes, and then, they put us on a train, pretty soon, for Camp Kilmer.

SH: What did you do for that two weeks before you got on the train for Camp Kilmer?

LM: Well, we were, again, drilling, and so on, and so forth, ... but, as far as the nursing end, we were issued some sort of a uniform, you know. ...

SH: Were they slacks? Is that what nurses were wearing?

LM: ... You know, I'm not even sure. I know our dress uniform was not slacks, you know. ... I don't even remember the color, you know, and I didn't have camo or anything like that. So, I'm not even sure what [it was], but it wasn't the dress uniform, [which] was olive drab green, you know, and I have it, you know. I have tried it on, and so on. It still fit. [laughter]

SH: That is wonderful.

JO: During your training, did they ever train you in how to use a gun?

LM: It was only once, you know, when I [was] in basic training. I was still in basic training and they took us out on, like, I guess, a firing range or something, and I had never [fired a gun]. My brothers and my father, even though we were on the farm, in the country, we never ever [used guns]. I never shot a gun or anything

SH: Really?

LM: No, and they weren't hunters or anything. So, this was all new to me, but, fortunately, you know, it was so fast-paced that, practically, I'd say, [I had] no training with guns, and so on, and so forth.

SH: Was part of your training in learning how to pack your equipment?

LM: Yes, well, somewhat, and striking the tent. ... My footlocker's out on the porch there.

SH: Really?

LM: Yes, [the footlocker] that I had for all the moving and everything, and then, eventually, sent it home. So, it's addressed to Mother and Dad out there, and it has, in the corner, "I certify this does not contain government property," [laughter] when I got out of the service, you know.

SH: I am glad we are legal here.

LM: ... I thought you would be.

SH: Tell us about the kind of equipment they gave a nurse to take overseas. Did you have everything you needed when you left Tennessee?

LM: Oh, no, no. ... We didn't have anything. We practically [had nothing]. You know, you could put it in an overnight bag, you know. We didn't have anything like that and, when we got over to Europe, ... we were doing a little drilling, and so on, and we were learning about setting up wards and things like that, before we were moved down to Southampton then.

SH: Okay, that was where you were.

LM: Yes. ... I don't know how they ever got us trained as well as we did, and then, as I said in my notes, that we were, supposedly, according to Stephen Ambrose's book, *Citizen Soldiers* (1997), the first evac hospital to go in. The field hospitals, some of them were in earlier, but we had to wait a little bit to go in.

SH: To back up, I am still curious about what you were doing in Tennessee. This has to be January or February of 1944.

LM: [Yes].

SH: It is not nice weather down there at that time.

LM: No, it isn't, but they were just folding up and getting ready to get on the train to go to Camp Kilmer. So, I didn't really get to practice anything with them, no.

SH: Okay. Did you get a leave to come home before you went to Kilmer?

LM: Yes, they did let us [go home]. I think, for a week or something, we went home, and then, went back out there and got back on the train and come to Camp Kilmer, because I was from Pennsylvania.

SH: How long were you at Kilmer before you left?

LM: Probably, well, maybe a week, not very long. ...

SH: How strict was the rule? I know it may change a little bit, but we have read that officers, especially the nurses, were not allowed to date ...

LM: Fraternize.

SH: ... nor have anything to do with the enlisted men.

LM: Oh, that is very true, you know. ... They had to salute us and everything, and so on, ... and there were penalties, you know, because some did overstep, and so on. I ended up with a big overstep, because I married a staff sergeant, [laughter] but the war was over. [laughter] ... My sister and [I], neither one of us had ever dated, through, you know, grade school, high school, and then, through nursing training, and then, when I went into the service, I'd never had a date or anything.

SH: Really?

LM: No. I don't know. ... I went through nursing [school], I mean, [served] overseas and everything, and came home and here I am, the war's over, and I'm out there in the farm. ... I'm fifty miles from the nearest hospital, eighty miles from where I went to nursing school, and I'm an RN and I'm helping milk and stuff, and I don't know. I don't have my driver's license; I finally got it. I don't know what I'm going to do, you know, for the rest of my life. I can't stay around the farm. My sister was teaching school and she had a car. Well, I got my license ... and I'm helping milk and I'm painting and varnishing in the house and trying to find things to keep me busy. ... Let's see what would happen first; ... oh, I sent Christmas [cards]. ... When I got out, in December, and I could have free mailing, because I wasn't all the way out, [had not yet been discharged], and so, I had these cheap Christmas cards and I sent them to [everyone I served with]. I had everybody's address from the outfit, the enlisted men, officers, doctors, everything, and I sent everybody one of these Christmas cards. ... I could put, "Free," on it, you know, didn't cost me much. ... Then, so, it went on and I'm still there, and my sister couldn't

wait until school's over. ... She and I are going to travel in her V-8. We're going out West and all over and, in January, Mother called me. I wasn't home. I had the family car and I was at a relative's, who had a special [emergency], there in the hospital. She was overnight for several nights with an entopic pregnancy. Now, here, you know, you don't get admitted, but, [at] any rate, I was pretending, you know, that I'm working, and I had the car. ... I was over at her place and Mother called me and she said, "You have a telegram." ... I said, "What does it say?" and she says, "Will arrive, Rimersburg. Love, Brod," B-R-O-D, misspelled. His name was Brad, Bradley, and she said, "Who is this?" and I said, "I'll be right home." I got in the car and I went home and Mother met me outside, and she said, "What's his family like?" I said, "I don't know," and she said, "What religion is he?" I said, "I don't know," and then, she said, "Where's he going to stay?" and I said, "I don't know. Oh, maybe in town," you know, and Mother said, "Well, he will not." She knew there's no place in town, in Rimersburg, you know. So, she said, "He will not. If he's good enough to come see you, he's good enough to stay here." So, boy, I'm telling you, that was in the forenoon and ... she didn't say any more all day, and I didn't. My sister came home from teaching and she must have told her, because it came evening, I helped milk and everything, and ... we're having supper, all of us, and the phone rang around seven and I got up and answered it. ... Brad says, "I'm out here at the Esso station and he's closing up," and my sister, the teacher, ... says, in the background, "I'll take you to Rimersburg." So, Mother had told her about the telegram, of course, apparently, and so, we got out and go in the car. I didn't say anything to her all the way out to town and we got there. I could see this car with the parking lights on by the Esso station. It was Esso then [later Exxon], and so, I got out and didn't say "boo" to her and went over and got in his car and told him to go a different way, not follow her home, and so, I had to find out a little more about him, you know. So, whenever we eventually got home, why, all the lights came on outside and everything and I took him in and I introduced him. ... They were in the parlor, you know, Dad and the brothers and my little sister, ... but Ruth wasn't there, and Mother came to the door in the parlor and called me out [of the room]. ... He was right at home, because he's one of ten kids, and he was born in this town, two streets over, and he died here, at this house.

SH: He was from Annandale, [New Jersey].

LM: Annandale. That's how I got to Annandale, and so, Mother said, "You hurt your sister so badly." She said, "You didn't introduce your friend," and she said that she's gone, she told me where, with a friend of hers, "and so, I want you to get your friend and go over and make it right with her." Mother was feeling very bad for my sister, and so, ... as soon as I could loosen him up, ... because he's from here and the farms around [here are similar], he had worked on farms and he was very comfortable with a big family, because he was one of ten, and so, we went over and, of course, I introduced him, and he had come for the weekend. This was Friday night and he was going to go home Sunday before he started to work, and so, [to go] back to work. Well, I was going to go with my father, who needed a hernia operation, as soon as I got home, and we were heading down to Pittsburgh on the train and he was going to be admitted and have a hernia operation. Well, my Brad said to me, "Oh, I'll take you and Dad down." "Dad? Okay." [We went] down to the hospital, and I have an aunt and uncle there ... that I was going to stay with, and then, go in, every day, to the hospital, and, of course, you waited a couple of days before your surgery, and then, X amount [afterwards]. Well, then, he said he was going to go home Sunday, but he decided [to stay]. He said he had to wait and see how Dad made out, and he

stayed, like, the whole week, you know. ... In February, he came back out and the rest is history. ... We're engaged in February and married in June. [laughter]

SH: I think we need to back up and go back to Camp Kilmer.

LM: Oh, yes; oh, I'm sorry. [laughter]

SH: No, that was a great story. What did they have you doing at Camp Kilmer? What were the rumors as to where you were going to go?

LM: ... I don't remember rumors at all. This is all so new to me. We would do some drilling, and so on, and so forth, there, at Camp Kilmer. We were there, but [for] so little time, and a lot of the time, we were having this type of a test or that type of a test and, pretty soon, we were put on a ship, and blackout, of course, and [we are] taken over to [England]. ...

SH: You boarded the ship in New York then.

LM: Yes.

SH: What was it like for you? You said you had never been on a ship. Were you seasick?

LM: Oh, no. Well, I mean, I didn't know what to expect and we were officers, so, we weren't as crowded as the enlisted men were, you know, on this ship. ...

SH: Do you remember the name of the ship?

LM: Well, it's the [USAT] *Mariposa*, and then, I came back on the [USAT] *Mauritania*, so, those two. They were both English ships and, ... until I went on a cruise, that was the only ship [travel I had experienced].

SH: On the *Mariposa*, how many of you were in a room? Were you in a stateroom?

LM: Yes, there were two of us.

SH: Just the two of you.

LM: No, we didn't have a lot of [roommates]. We had pretty good accommodations and the meals were fine.

SH: Did you have duties at that point?

LM: No.

SH: Was there anything that you had to do regarding nursing or anything like that?

LM: No. We were supposed to get together, and I forget whether we had little lectures or something, but once a day, you know, but it took longer than an ordinary ship takes today to go over, and I didn't realize that, probably, we weren't going straight. I mean, we had to do a little dipping and diving.

SH: The zigzag. Was there any time that you were told that there was a possible problem, either with the weather or with something else?

LM: No, no, they never did, fortunately.

SH: How did you pass the time?

LM: Good question. I did a lot of walking around the deck and things like that. That's the only thing I can remember.

SH: Were you seasick?

LM: A little. We came back in a ship, too, that, you know, it was an English ship. ... Well, actually, my husband and I went to Alaska and we had gone up part way on a bus, and then, another bus the rest of the way, too, but, then, coming back, we were put ... on a ship and, goodness sakes, I dreaded that, because I'm thinking of it then, [laughter] but they're a lot different than they were back then.

SH: When you first landed in Scotland, were you at Prestwick or Glasgow or Greenock?

LM: Well, I really don't know that we knew. I think it was near Glasgow, but, [at] any rate, we were put directly on a train and, you know, you didn't really know what was what. ...

SH: When were you aware that you were going to Europe and not to the Pacific? Do you know?

LM: When was it?

SH: When were you aware?

LM: Well, ... whenever we were at Fort Meade and they said that they needed someone because they were going overseas shortly, I'm not even sure whether they told us which way we were going, but I rather think that we might have known that we were, you know, going east, yes.

SH: You talked about the wonderful way that the English woman woke you, with scones and tea.

LM: Yes, scones and tea. I kept in touch with her after that.

SH: Did the rest of the English people treat you well?

LM: Oh, yes, yes. I can never say anything but they were wonderful.

SH: Were there social activities for you when you were in England? I know you were busy training.

LM: Yes, during the day. There, really, I don't think there were any social issues. ... I remember going to some sort of an evening, I don't know, affair, that we went with our hostess, Mrs. (Leashman?), and they would be introducing different folks. ... They're talking about different countries. I can't imagine ... what they were trying to do, but folks would come out [dressed up on a stage] and you had to kind of guess what country they were from, or something, and, you know, whether it was Japan or South America or something. ... We didn't have to do it, to go up, but they would have folks come out. [laughter] Well, when they said, it was either North America or the United States, I'm afraid it was the United States, they come out with the Indian garb on, you know, [Mrs. Manning imitates a Native American chant], [laughter] and that was the United States.

SH: Never mind they have two United States Army nurses in the crowd, right?

LM: No; great life.

SH: Did you see any of the effects of the German bombings?

LM: Yes, we did, of course, on the way down, you know, on the train, and we'd go through different places. ... Of course, every night was the blackout, you know. There were just no lights, ever. ...

SH: Were there any air raids while you were there?

LM: ... It didn't affect where we were, at that time. ...

SH: You came down from Scotland to Liverpool, England. You stayed in Liverpool.

LM: Yes. Well, we were near Liverpool, Southport, but, [at] any rate, ... I don't remember any air raids or anything, no.

SH: Did you get to do any exploring? Did you go into London?

LM: No, never. I hadn't been. I went a lot later than that, you know. I've been there, and a couple more times, but, no, we didn't.

SH: Do you remember when you got to the Liverpool area?

LM: Yes.

SH: What month was that in 1944?

LM: Let's see, June in '44 ...

SH: We know it is before June.

LM: Well, I know. [laughter] ... It could have been May, April or May, you know, the end of April, 1st of May, and then, we eventually were put on a train, went down there to Southampton, and that's where we [embarked]. Well, we'd been practicing setting up before we went down there and learning what supplies and everything ... we'd need. Boy, I'm telling you, I don't know who ever arranged all that, but that was a massive, massive affair, you know, getting us all poised, ready for that big-time [invasion], which was in June. ...

JO: We were just talking about the build-up that was occurring. We were wondering if you had any idea what was coming, in reference to D-Day coming up.

LM: Very little, extremely very little, because, ... before I'd left, you know, I really hadn't paid that much attention to what was going on, on the other side. I knew that England had been bombed a lot, and so on, and so forth, and we saw evidence of that, but I didn't really have any idea of what ... was ahead, or of how imminent it was. ... I don't know whether even [General Dwight D.] Eisenhower knew it, at that time, just when this was going to break loose, ... but I can't imagine how England billeted, took care of so many Americans, you know, and all the airfields around. ... When we moved down to near Southampton, why, ... we were surrounded with airfields and we were set up in tents and, oh, if somebody had pneumonia or an appendectomy or something, you know, they [would come in], but we were trying ...

SH: You were actually operating as a hospital.

LM: Well, we were in, we called it "dry run," you know, and had ... all the tents, and so on, everything, set up like a little hospital, and then, ... one night, June the 5th, when I went on duty, I don't know, ... maybe there were a couple patients, but they didn't need anything, or anything, ... but the roar that night was worse than I've ever, ever heard, because the planes were [taking off]. ... You had a sense that something's happening, but there's no way, there's no radio, no anything, and, before morning, we had our first patients, you know. There were a few that were pulled out of the water, you know, ... and those LSTs [landing ship, tank] were coming back, and so on. ... There could have been a paratrooper or two, but, [at] any rate, ... we had it, and then, we were on twelve-hour shifts from there on, until we went in on D-Day.

SH: When were you told that the invasion had taken place?

LM: We were never told.

SH: They just started showing up.

LM: Yes. We never knew. I didn't know. I never knew exactly where we were at any [point], and the same way all the time we were moving around in Europe. You know, we were never in a town or anything and there were no road signs or anything. Everything was covered, you know. ... You were kind of going on, well, just day-to-day, and knew what you had to do and did it,

and I often wondered how I did, you know, twelve-hour shifts, and so on, and so forth.  
[laughter]

JO: You were in the shock tent, right?

LM: Yes. ... In our set up, you know, ... they would come ... over land, of course, you know. We didn't have the 'copters, but they would bring them in, we would observe ... how soon they needed to get to the OR [operating room]. Most of them did, you know, [determine] ... if it was something that was imminent, the chest injuries, and so on, and so forth, ... but just, you know, [if they had] the leg shot up or something, you know, they didn't need to get there right away or anything, as long as the bleeding was controlled, and so on, and so forth. So, [at] any rate, it [proceeded], but never [knowing where we were]. I ... can't even remember the first time we got a *Stars and Stripes*, [the US Armed Forces newspaper], but, then, that was just old news by that time, you know, and your folks didn't know that much, either. ...

SH: When you were still in Southampton, before June 5th, how was it set up? Were you set up in just a couple of tents? Did you have a hospital tent? What did you have when you moved down to Southampton?

LM: Well, they set up like our setup would be overseas.

SH: Okay. Can you describe that a little bit for us, for example, the equipment?

LM: ... Well, of course, there'd be the OR, you know. ... There was, I believe, maybe two ORs, you know, and so on, and so forth, and the other tents ... [were] where they'd go directly after surgery, and so on, and so forth. ... We only kept patients twenty-four, thirty-six hours, you know, and then, we'd send them off, back. Personally, I don't remember what the [conditions were]. Of course, we didn't have a look-see, to see what was happening. We knew, where we were, there were usually four of us, sometimes five, in a tent, that we were staying in. ...

SH: Did you have your own kitchen, so-to-speak?

LM: No, no, you ate ...

SH: In a mess tent?

LM: Yes, you ate in the mess tent, always.

SH: How many people would be involved in the 109th Evacuation Hospital? How many nurses?

LM: Like forty.

SH: Forty nurses?

LM: Nurses, [yes].

SH: How many doctors?

LM: Probably that many, if that. We had the different specialties, you know, general surgery, and, of course, we had some that [specialized], neurosurgeons and oral surgeons. ... How they ever did that, I'll never, ever understand. [laughter]

SH: Were dentists included in this?

LM: Yes. Oh, well, ... yes, there were dentists, I guess, but, ... well, I know I had a toothache on the way over, in the ship, and I sought help, you know, and he pulled out a tooth. I don't know which one it was, [laughter] but he didn't fill it or anything. He took the easy way out. It was a molar. [laughter] That was something I remember about the trip over, was a toothache, over in Europe.

SH: That would have kept me walking, too.

LM: Yes.

SH: How many enlisted people were involved? The doctors and nurses were obviously officers.

LM: Well, of course, there's a motor pool and there's a laboratory and there's radiology, and each one had X amount of people. Interestingly, our commanding officer was a captain and ... she was regular Army, ... and then, of course, the doctors, and then, of course, there's a lot of surgery and anesthesia. This is what I wanted to [say]; I'm always amazed at this, every time I think about it. ... Our nurse, chief nurse, happened to be an anesthesiologist, and so, ... there was maybe only one, or two at the most, ... for anesthesia, of our MDs, but they trained [the men]. They took some of the enlisted men that had some college background, and so on, and they gave them a fast course, and they gave the anesthesia, and I often think, you know, how, you know, in today's world, you know, for insurance, oh, my God, [laughter] but they did fine, yes, and some, a few of them, went on to be anesthesiologists, you know.

JO: Wow.

LM: But, they had to, you know, become a MD and everything, but maybe only two, but, at least, you know, they did their work. ... The nice thing about [it]; it's maybe not nice, but we had the cream of the crop as patients. We didn't have anybody that was compromised, we didn't have anybody, you know, [such as] geriatrics or anything like that. We had people that had to pass a [physical] test, you know, to get into the service, and so on, and so forth. So, that makes a big difference, because, ... in nursing, and I did a lot of ER nursing, I mean, you get all ages and all kinds of things, ... but we didn't see that. Everybody, you know, was top of the line and they had the best chance.

SH: Were there any women who were not nurses attached to the 109th?

LM: No. We did have a Red Cross person, a couple of times, ... but we moved so much that they couldn't do their Red Cross nursing. ... Well, it wasn't nursing. ... I'm not sure what she was doing. [laughter] I mean, there was one that I remember that was in our tent once and she was with the Red Cross, but we didn't have one always. ...

SH: You had talked about learning how to salute and accepting salutes.

LM: Yes.

SH: Was that kind of discipline kept up once you got to Europe?

LM: Oh, no. I mean, the enlisted men didn't have to salute us, you know, when we were ... on duty or anything like that, no. One funny thing, I may have told you this, well, I don't think I have today, but, [at] any rate, I always had my hair, I don't know how long yours [Jessica's] is, but pretty long. Well, mine was shoulder-length. Mother cut all our hair, the boys, the girls, everybody, and so, mine was like to here. ... One night, on duty, I don't know even what country we were in at that point, but ... a corpsman, I had sat down, there's, like, a box there that you could sit on, I don't know, I had to write something down; we didn't have charts. ... They had their little tag on and we put medicines we gave right there and everything, and we didn't do vital signs, like [in peacetime?]. ...

SH: They basically wore their charts on their gown.

LM: Well, yes, ... but, [at] any rate, I'm sitting down to do something and, all of a sudden, an Army blanket was around me and some guy, who was one of the aides, he said, "I'm going to cut your hair." He cut my hair short and he said, "You should ... keep your hair short," and I have ever since. He was a barber. [laughter]

SH: Really? That helps.

LM: Oh, yes, he was, but, I mean, he also fulfilled; I mean, in other times, when he's off duty, he did barbering, you know. ... He came to a reunion, maybe the first reunion that I got to. Well, we didn't have them right away, until we were a lot older, and then, his son ... had been coming and his son, because he heard this story, ... finally, he said to me, "Lois, write that down." He said, "I want my grandkids to know about their grandfather." [laughter] ...

SH: Did he cut your hair as short as it is now?

LM: I'm not sure that he had it in the different lengths, but he cut my hair short, ... because I have natural wave. I've never had a perm or anything, ... but that's where I got it. [laughter]

SH: How hard was it to keep clean, to keep your hair up?

LM: Well, of course, I never had done anything. I never did makeup or anything, you know, so, I don't know how they fared, because [I did not], [laughter] and that's me. ... When I have said that in front of my one daughter, you know, "I don't use makeup," she said, "Let's face it,

Mother, maybe you should." [laughter] So, well, that's her, [laughter] but, [at] any rate, no, ... that's how I got my hair shorter. It was thanks to him.

SH: What about the everyday things that we take so for granted?

LM: Well, we didn't even get a daily shower or anything, you know. ... You know, there was always a water problem, because we were in tents and we'd move and we wouldn't be in town, connected to the water supply or anything. ... The water truck had to come, and then, can you imagine furnishing water to give a couple hundred people a shower or something? ... You didn't. You didn't get showers or anything like that. You know, you didn't wash your face every morning, and so on. ... It didn't affect me that much, because I was never very conscious of all that stuff anyway, [laughter] you know, from out in the farm, and so on, and never dating or anything.

JO: I remember reading that, maybe on Christmas, you got to heat water in your helmet to wash your hair.

LM: Oh, yes. ... We used our helmet for lots of things, and some of the things you don't want to know.

SH: I can use my imagination.

LM: But, in that hotel where we were, ... well, we didn't realize it, it was the Bulge, you know, the start of the Bulge, and, at Christmas, we ... had been moved from where we were, real fast, back and we were in a, I don't know whether it was a hotel, or something like that. ... We were in rooms and we didn't have any heat or anything and I had some sterno [canned heat], you know, and I heated water in the helmet and managed to wash my hair. I don't know how. You know, naturally, you couldn't rinse it or anything, but it hadn't been washed for who knows [how long], you know, I can't even remember. You know, the showers, I mean, depending on how often the water truck got there, and so on. One time, the water truck didn't come. ... We had to brush our teeth with champagne, because we were in the Champagne area and we had all of that you could handle. So, it didn't hurt. [laughter] ...

SH: You are the only woman I know of that is wealthy enough to brush your teeth with champagne. [laughter]

LM: Yes, right. Oh, dear, it was "found equipment."

SH: Do you think growing up on a farm, in a rural place, where you really had to make do and create things, helped you?

LM: ... Of course, of course. You know, I wasn't used to any luxuries or anything, you know, or electricity all the time or anything like that, definitely did [help], and everybody wasn't like me, though.

JO: After D-Day, how much longer were you in England before you crossed the Channel?

LM: Well, actually, we were set up and getting patients from D-Day, but we didn't go in until, like, the 1st of July.

JO: The 1st of July.

LM: Yes, and, as I said, we weren't the first ones to get on land, because they had to make sure there were no mines or anything for us to get in there and land. ... On Utah Beach, we spent the night on the beach, you know, under blackout. Well, we went in under blackout, of course, and we had some C rations [military-issued food rations] and stuff, but that's what we had to eat and, fortunately, it wasn't raining.

SH: How much further did you go in before you set up your tents and hospital again?

LM: Well, how far? ... I wouldn't know miles. ...

SH: You got off of the beach.

LM: Yes, and stayed on the beach all night, and then, the next day, we moved in, but, you know, we weren't set up for patients for, probably; well, we were the first ones to really set up. ... Well, we were near St. Lo, [France], and so on, and so forth, and then, we just kept moving, thirty-some moves. ... We were not in a town or anything. We were always out in the field. So, we just never knew, and I can't even tell you how long it was. Time ... didn't mean a thing then, you know, ... because you were either working all night or you were working all day and trying to sleep all night. ... I have trouble sleeping now, but, boy, how I ever slept over there, I'll never know. [laughter]

SH: What were you hearing? Were you working more at night or were you working during the day? Did that rotate?

LM: Yes, you're right.

SH: You would take turns working nights and days.

LM: Yes. Maybe a week at a time, or something like that, you'd be on nights, and then, you'd be on days, and, of course, if you're on nights and you're moved during the day, you were up all day, yes, yes.

SH: How did you find a way to rest?

LM: Somehow; youth, [laughter] in one word.

SH: How did you keep your bandages and things like that clean? Was the unit completely supplied all the time?

LM: Well, yes, they had to be, and that was the big thing, and water was a big thing, too. Water was a big thing, because we couldn't, you know, trust the city water or anything like that, and I really don't know how they got enough water in there for everything, ... for hospitals and personnel. I really can't imagine the logistics. ... Well, you can, in today's world, imagine ... what it was like.

JO: Can you describe what it was like to set up the tents and the medical supplies, and then, pack everything up again? Did you actually help with the tents or was that the GIs?

LM: Well, GIs, mainly. We had to get our stuff all packed up, and then, we would go around and, you know, take out some of the pegs, and so on, and so forth, but we didn't actually have to do that. You know, they did it for us, ... but they got pretty expert in doing it real fast, you know, to be on the way, ... in a convoy, and so on. We really learned about that.

SH: What was it like to be in a convoy? How long?

LM: Well, we ... never knew, depending on how far we had to go, and then, they'd stop, you know, for a bathroom stop, and the guys never had a problem, but ...

SH: What about the women?

LM: Yes. Well, they would put a piece of a tent or something up, burlap or something, and stretch it out to a tree, you know, and then, everybody take turns going back there, and so on, ... but it wasn't easy. I couldn't do it today.

SH: Were there things, at that point, like toilet paper?

LM: Yes.

SH: You were supplied with that.

LM: Well, most of the time.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: You talked about being in St. Lo; is that one of the first places you think that you set up?

LM: Oh, we weren't that far in ...

SH: When you first set up?

LM: Yes, but we never knew where we were, at all, [laughter] and I didn't know about St. Lo or any of that, either. [Editor's Note: The main thrust of the Allied breakout, Operation: COBRA, from Normandy began at St. Lo, France, on July 25, 1944.]

SH: That is what I wanted to know.

LM: No, we didn't know.

SH: Did anybody come back and tell you how it was progressing?

LM: Nobody, no, no, and there's no newspaper, no anything. ...

SH: Did you ever see anyone like Eisenhower?

LM: No, no. I'm related to [General] Patton and never saw him. [laughter]

SH: Tell us about some of the incidents that you remember in these thirty take-downs. You said the tent was moved thirty times; the hospital, I should say. You call it a tent.

LM: Oh, well, we had thirty-seven moves.

SH: Thirty-seven moves.

JO: Wow.

LM: Yes, but I don't know where they all were, you know, anything like that.

SH: No, but what are some of the things that you remember, different little episodes?

LM: Well, I just remember working and, you know, my tent mates, and so on, and being very busy, either all day or all night, whichever shift I went on. ... I don't have any specific memories that I can [recall]. It's mostly things that weren't [ordinary] that I remember, and that is in "Where was Grandma on D-Day?" [a brief memoir written by Mrs. Manning], things that weren't everyday things that I have written about.

JO: Could you tell us about some of the stories you have from when you went on leave?

LM: Well, ... we had a three-day pass to Paris, and you probably read about that in the [piece].

JO: Yes

SH: Would you tell us for the tape?

LM: Yes. ... Let me see what I wrote about that.

JO: I remember that you had a really good story about getting to see Mont-Saint-Michel.

LM: Oh, yes. ... Let's see, well, you asked me ... to tell you something about Paris or what?

JO: Sure

LM: Yes. Well, like I said, we saw the Follies Bergere, [a Parisian music hall], and you know all that, you know. ... The three days we were there, there was no [heat]; you know, we didn't have any heat in our rooms or anything like that. There was heat downstairs and they took us to see all the sights around Paris. It was very generous, you know. ... We had a tour of Paris, and so on, and our pictures taken, you know, ... by the Arc de Triomphe, and so on. ... My kids have kind of taken those away from me. [laughter] So, they're the ones that were hanging on the wall, and so on, but, [at] any rate. Well, I'd studied history, and so on, and so forth, and I found out more being over there than I ever found out in history books, [laughter] but, as far as where we were set up, ... we never really knew, you know, and there were no signs.

SH: What about the weather? How did that affect your operation?

LM: Well, that first fall was a very, very wet fall. We went in, you know, after D-Day and I have read since that ... it is the wetlands in this portion [of Europe] and they had done some engineering things that kind of drained a lot of those places, but, whenever they were expecting the Germans, that they had, you know, just broke those down, or whatever, ... and let them be as sappy [as possible]. ... We were issued, as I told you, the paratrooper boots, because ... we had on our just low shoes. We didn't have anything to keep ... our feet dry. ... So, they issued us paratrooper boots and that helped somewhat, because we weren't sopping wet. ... Weather, of course, is a big factor. ... We experienced a very wet fall and quite a bad winter, you know, with lots of snow, and so on, '44 into '45, but it all happened so fast [laughter] and it's been so many years ago.

SH: Were you ever under any kind of artillery attack or bombings?

LM: Well, there were some that were lobbed in. When we were in France, in the early days, the nights would be lit up with flares, and so on, and so forth, and there was something hit that was very close to us, but we didn't have any direct hits, thank God. We were always worried about that. ...

SH: To be able to see, to do operating and to assess the damage, what kind of ...

LM: Lighting?

SH: Lighting, what did you have; kerosene?

LM: Yes, that type of light. ... Nobody would ever attempt surgery, in today's world, with the lighting they had, but, like I said, they were fortunate in having the best people to deal with. I mean, the young soldiers, they were not compromised. ...

SH: Did you have any interaction with the native people, the French or the Belgians?

LM: Well, yes, not too much, ... and they were always glad to see us, you know, and so on. ... Had we been in a town, we might have been [more in touch], but, see, we were out in the hedgerows, and so on, and we could see some houses, occasionally, ... but we were ... never invited in their homes or anything like that. ... Then, a lot of places were [where] folks had left

because of the way the war was going, and, of course, then, they were finding, like I said, the champagne and things like that, and they helped themselves. [laughter] ... I think it was a marvelous job of supplying us and everything. I mean, I can't say enough about that, you know, how they did medical supplies and, one time, maybe twice, there was a gas shortage, you know, the gasoline trucks, and so on. You probably read about that, anyway, and then, of course, we couldn't move without that. We had to have it. ... Trips that weren't necessary didn't get taken.  
...

SH: Did you travel, usually, in a truck?

LM: Yes, always, always, in the back of a two-and-a-half-ton truck, you know, with the seats on the sides, and then, they'd stop after so long a time, ... you know, for potty stops, and so on, like I told you, but, yes, from site-to-site, that's how. ... Of course, there were motor pool guys, you know, that were [driving], and they're traveling under blackout, and so on, so, it was not the best of circumstances, but that was something they had to do. In today's world, there'll never be anything like that again, ever, no, thank God.

SH: Thank God, right. I wanted to ask if you ever treated any of the enemy combatants.

LM: Yes.

SH: Did you?

LM: Yes, oh, definitely. In fact, ... you know, there were a lot of prisoners taken, and so on, and I remember, particularly, Thanksgiving, and that I had a tent full of Germans, ... you know, that I was caring for, couldn't understand them or anything. ... They were really glad to be taken [prisoner], as you know, you from your history.

SH: Were they?

LM: You know, that they were out of the line of fire, and so on, ... but I couldn't converse with them. I didn't know any of the language, but I could give them their penicillin [laughter] and whatever they needed.

SH: Were they respectful of you?

LM: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: Were they being guarded, if they were prisoners of war?

LM: I'm not even sure. I don't think they really needed to. They were happy to be where they were and out of that front. ...

SH: Did you ever treat any civilians?

LM: I don't remember that we did. No, I don't think so.

JO: I understand, after you got your pass to go to Paris, you had some trouble coming back.

LM: Well, yes. The outfit had moved. Well, of course, I mean, there was no sign, you know, "This way to the 109th," [laughter] or anything like that, but we had a very strange night. ... You probably read that.

JO: I would love to hear you tell it in person.

LM: Well, let me see if I can find it.

JO: Sure.

[TAPE PAUSED]

LM: ... Oh, yes, I see. Now, you're talking about the trip home.

SH: You can talk about other trips, but this one is of particular interest, this wild night that you had getting back from Paris to your unit.

LM: Yes, yes. Well, the driver, our drivers, there were, I think, two or three of us nurses and he was assigned to drive us back home. ... He's [driving] a command car and no heat and it's January, ... but we got back there and our outfit had moved, and they weren't, ... you know, where he'd left [them] to pick us up, ... I mean, to take us, and then, he's bringing us back. ... So, we're struggling along and there was no compass in this car. So, we didn't [know] north, east, south or west, but, [at] any rate, ... it was cold. ... We, of course, had our better clothes on, because we'd been to Paris, and, you know, ... I think we had our skirts on, and so on, ... and we're in the back of this command car. Well, [at] any rate, ... we got back and, of course, our outfit had moved. So, we didn't know where they went, and so, here we are, blindly going along. ... We came to this one place where there was a railroad track and the bar was down, like there was a train [coming], and we waited and waited and waited and waited and there's no train, there's no anything. ... Finally, I don't know how long we waited and we were just so cold, but that arm went back up and just like [a train had passed], [laughter] and so, we drove on, because there was a house there. ... Of course, everything was blackout, that was supposed to be, ... but our driver thought, maybe, if he could find here [on a map], he would find out where we were, not that he knew where we were going to be going, but at least where the line was, and, when we got there [to the house], ... he left us and he said, "I'm going in to see if I can find out." Well, he went in and, pretty soon, there were shots rang out, all the lights went out; oh, my God. Well, none of us knew how to drive anyway, ... and here we were, and he came out, eventually. ... We said, "What happened?" He said, "Well, they were having a fight and they shot the lights out," but he said, "I'm glad I stopped there, because the bridge that's ahead of us," he said, "if we'd have gone across there, we'd have been behind the enemy lines." "Oh, dear." So, we turned around and started [again] and we just kept traveling, you know, no lights, no directions, no anything, and, finally, found, ... towards morning, [the] 104th Evacuation Hospital. ... They let us use their "coffee cans" or whatever, [laughter] their telephone, and called the outfit. ... They had moved up into Belgium. So, we went to [eat], and they gave us breakfast there and

everything and he got directions. ... Eventually, we got back to [the hospital], or we got to where they had set up, but, of course, there's no way they could have let us know anyway, where they were, because we were on the way whenever they got orders to move and they ... left no sign, [laughter] not that it would've helped anyway. ...

SH: Did he say what the fight was about?

LM: No, oh, no. ... He wasn't in there very long until the lights all went out. [laughter] ... I don't know, but we were afraid he was [shot], ... and we didn't know how to drive. There we were, [laughter] in the middle of the night someplace, we didn't know where; I still don't know where we were. I will never know. [laughter]

SH: That is right, you will never know. That is so interesting.

LM: ... Yes. ...

SH: In your memoir, you wrote that you had won a prize.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Okay, I will turn it back on.

LM: Okay. ... We had gone into France and, ... one day, those of us who weren't on duty, they said, "Get in the truck," and they took us to, ... it's a touristy place, Mont-Saint-Michel, and it's a; actually, not a convent, but a ...

SH: An abbey?

LM: Yes. ... It's built on a hill, ... but there's just buildings, buildings after buildings, and I don't know how they ever had water or anything up there, or drainage, but, [at] any rate, we couldn't go up there or anything. I've been up there since, ... but, [at] any rate, we went to there and we're walking around and a GI came up to me, and this wasn't too long after D-Day, but, I mean, maybe a month or two. ... He approached me and he told me, he said, "I picked up this glass on D-Day," this little shot glass, and he said, "I vowed to give it to the first American girl I'd see and you're the first American girl," and he gave me this glass and I just valued that glass, because of the history of it, and he had picked it up on D-Day, and so, that's the story of that glass.

SH: Yes. I was going to say, for the record, both Jessica and I have seen this glass. I think that is a true miracle, that you actually got it from that point and kept it in one piece.

LM: Yes. Well, it wasn't easy. [laughter] Well, thankfully, it was small, [laughter] extremely small.

SH: You talked about having the trunk that you eventually sent home. Did that just get moved with the hospital?

LM: Yes, every time, yes. We didn't have very much to move, you know, and, there, our dress uniform would be in that, and some extra fatigues, or something, you know, that we'd been issued, were in that, and that's about it.

SH: You talked about the shortage of water and how difficult that was, and, a few times, gasoline.

LM: Yes.

SH: However, was there ever a shortage of food or medical supplies?

LM: Not that I was aware of. I mean, gasoline was short at different times and hampered ... the move that we wanted to make, or the distance, but ... not medical supplies, as far as I know.

SH: We have talked about penicillin as well. Was that something that you began using right away when you were in Europe or was that something that became available?

LM: Well, you know, I don't remember it, I'd never given it over here, and I know they said it was new and I remember giving it, ... but I don't remember the timeline, dear. Yes, I just remember starting to give [it] in shots.

SH: As you went along, were there things that you all, as a group, learned to do or not to do?

LM: Oh, yes.

SH: Because you have to be very clever to be able to do what you were doing, were there certain things that you figured out how to do better than what you had been trained to do?

LM: ... Probably, but, again, the circumstances were so different that, you know, we'd never, you know, took care of folks in tents, with their clothes on, and so on, and so forth, you know. We didn't undress patients, and you'd put them in the bed with [their clothes on], you know, and they were just in [there] on cots, and so on, and so forth, but we didn't keep patients very long. I mean, our patients were [wounded], all had some sort of injury, and so on, and so forth. ... Twenty-four to thirty-six hours, we did emergency surgery and sent them back for their, probably, more definitive surgery, that [they] needed, but we didn't have any time that we were ...

SH: Did you ever deal with people who were suffering from, I think, back then, you would call it ...

LM: "Section Eight?"

SH: Yes.

LM: Yes, but ... it was so few that I don't really recall any problems with that.

SH: Within the evacuation hospital, there was a tremendous amount of pressure on the staff, on the go all the time, the lack of sleep, all of this.

LM: Yes.

SH: Did anyone in that group ever suffer from battle fatigue or did not want to go on?

LM: Not in our outfit, really, no. Everybody kind of hung in and did the best [they could].

SH: Was there another question that you wanted to ask, Jessica?

JO: I believe you had a story about some surgeons being fired upon.

LM: Oh, yes, that. ... There was a commanding officer and his driver and a couple other surgeons, and ... we always had this scout. They'd send out someone ahead, before we moved, you know, to find a site for us to set up [at], and they were out looking for that site. ... Towards the evening, they hadn't come back; well, we weren't aware. We weren't always aware of what everybody was doing or the assignments that everybody had, but ... some Germans came that night, ... back to our outfit, and they told us that they; well, they wanted medical supplies, to take care of [their men], to get these folks back. ... The first we knew about it was whenever this [happened]. They [the Americans] were sighting, looking for a place for us to set up, but they didn't come back, and what happened was, they were stopped ... by, well, I forget what you call it, but, [at] any rate, the enemy, they were behind the enemy line a little bit. ... The guys all got down under the jeep, you know, and they were being fired at, and so, he, the driver, got back up and held up ... our medical flag, you know, and they stopped, ... but they had already killed a couple of our officers, you know, that were on this [scouting party].

SH: Really?

LM: [Yes], but our commanding officer wasn't killed or anything, and that night, ... when they didn't get back, there were some Germans [that] came to the outfit. ... They said that they had the surgeons' bodies, that they would give us [them] back if we would give them some medical supplies, and which we did, and they, you know, gave us back the [bodies].

SH: They basically bartered supplies for the bodies of the men that they had killed.

LM: Yes. It was sad.

SH: You talked about Christmas.

LM: Yes. ...

SH: This was after you caught up with your group. The reason that they had to move was because the Bulge had pushed them back out. Talk about that little incident at Metz, if you would, and what you remember.

LM: Well, Christmas, we were moved, but we usually go forward and, this time, we went backward, and so, we didn't know what was happening. ... Like, as I said then, Christmas, ... our chaplain did have a service for us, you know, and we were put in this hotel, or whatever. There wasn't any electricity and there wasn't any lights or any heat or anything, and I, for some reason or other, was able to get some water, because there wasn't water there for a bath or anything, you know, but I got some and heated it with some Sterno, and, just in there, washed my hair. ... I often wonder how I did that, and, of course, that same helmet had been used for many other things, including, as you can perhaps envision, ... but, you know, you make do, whatever. Some of these things, I wouldn't tell my grandchildren, the actual [facts], [laughter] read between the lines stuff.

SH: When do you first remember meeting your husband? What is your first memory of him?

LM: Well, see, he was the motor pool sergeant. He'd often have to [secure us transportation], you know. The war was over and, ... if we wanted to go someplace or something, and we were off, that we still had shifts, morning and night, and I just remember him, you know, he was the head of the motor pool and, ... if you wanted a driver, you had to go to him and tell him where you wanted to go or be taken, and he would oblige, and so on, but that's all.

JO: You were actually transferred to his unit, right, to the 106th?

LM: Yes, right, from the 109th to the 106th.

SH: After you were pushed back, like you said, back to Metz, during the Bulge, and then, you started moving forward again, were you moving more quickly than you had in the past?

LM: Not necessarily.

SH: Not necessarily. That was what I wondered, did the rate of "take down, put back up" change?

LM: Well, no, there was this time around Christmastime, you know, it's hard to remember, how many days or whatever, but I know the chaplain had ... some sort of a service for us, and nobody knows anything. Why, there's ... nothing to share or anything. You just kind of hang. [laughter]

SH: How often were you able to have services? Did the chaplain do this every Sunday? Did he travel with the 109th?

LM: At some points. Well, yes, he was assigned to our outfit, and he would go on through the [service], you know, and, if anybody wanted to; it wasn't necessarily Catholic or Protestant or anything, but he had kind of a universal type of message. ... We were either working all day Sunday or sleeping, because ... you never knew, "Is this Sunday?" "No, no." You kind of kept track of ... whatever the date [was], you know, like the 12th or the 13th, that's the only thing.

SH: Do you remember where the chaplain was from or anything about him?

LM: No, no, I don't.

SH: You talked about getting the *Stars and Stripes* and it was old news. Was there anything that you read in the *Stars and Stripes* that was shocking, that you were surprised by?

LM: No, I didn't pay much attention to all that.

SH: As you were moving forward, did you hear when President] Roosevelt died?

LM: Yes, somehow or other, that did get through. I don't know what the [communication was]. ... I have a friend that, he was in the Signal Corps and he would be able to tell you better, but I'm [not sure]. [laughter]

SH: Was there a reaction amongst the people in the 106th to that news?

LM: Well, they were [affected]. Everyone, of course, was surprised and taken aback at not knowing what was next, and, you know, we were wondering ... how it would affect us, naturally, and so, I don't remember too much about that.

SH: When did you first have a sense that the war might be coming to an end in Europe?

LM: I don't think I could answer that, because ...

SH: Maybe I should ask, did you ever have the sense that it was coming to an end?

LM: Not really, no. ... Well, it was a gradual slow down, but, ... I mean, I don't know that I would have a date or anything concrete.

SH: What about crossing rivers and things like that? Was that ever a challenge for you?

LM: Well, you know, because we crossed on all kinds of [laughter] bridges and some that were, you know, made by [Army] engineers, and so on, and just plunked in there and you'd rattle across and hope, and keep your fingers crossed. If you can imagine, I did a lot of finger crossing [laughter] throughout those years.

SH: Do you remember any incident when you were perhaps the most frightened for yourself personally?

LM: Well, maybe that night when we were lost, you know, probably. We didn't know whether we'd ever find our outfit again, [laughter] probably.

SH: Of all the incidents that you carry around in your memory, some that you shared with us and, also, with your family, what are you most proud of?

LM: The fact that I ... had my health and my freedom to make my choice, to do what I did, and I didn't really consult my family. I had a very strong feeling of being an American. ... The fact that we were in this skirmish, and, if I could help in any way, I was more than pleased to be able to do it, and I wasn't scared. Like, so many folks, you know, say, "Weren't you scared?" Well, you're young and you just don't have those [thoughts], you know. I mean, I didn't know that much about what could happen, naturally, and ... being the only one in the family that could serve meant a lot to me, too.

SH: When the war ended in Europe, how were you notified and what was the reaction?

LM: Well, ... individually, we didn't see anything, but it just kind of filtered in that it was over, and that's when I wrote that poem, and so on, and so forth, about V-E Day.

SH: Oh, we do not have that.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: I am putting it back on now; please, continue.

LM: Okay. This letter was written on the 8th of May of 1945, to my parents. "Dearest Mom and all. Just why are we all so happy on this, the 8th day of May? Why do we feel so thankful? Yes, this is V-E Day. For more than a year, we have worked and prayed for this day to come. The going hasn't always been easy, nor has it always been fun. Dear God, in all our rejoicing, may we not withhold credit where due. We owe so much to our fighting men and we owe so much to you. We all are filled with emotion, there is much we feel and can't say, but these six words best say it: Thank you, God, for V-E Day."

SH: That is wonderful. Thank you for sharing. I am so glad that you remembered that.

LM: Well, I went in looking for something else.

SH: That is wonderful. Here, you say that you were actually in Regen, Germany, when you wrote that.

LM: Yes.

SH: Then, you were transferred to Austria.

LM: Yes. ... Well, you had to have X amount of points to come home and everybody, you know, the war's over and they have all this personnel, and [they had to figure out] what to do with us, I mean. ... Of course, I hadn't gone in until January '44, so, I didn't have enough weeks and months and days to be discharged or to go home, so, ... that's the reason that they started transferring us to different outfits, and so on, and so forth.

SH: That was when you transferred out of the 109th and into the 106th.

LM: Yes; well, no, that was in the middle of the thing, in March of that year.

SH: Okay, I thought it was afterwards.

LM: ... Yes. ... In February, I and others received word we were being transferred. I went to the 106th Evac. Hospital. Of course, I was very upset; little did I know, long range, that the move was most fortunate, because the unit had ... a staff sergeant, namely Bradley F. Manning. [laughter]

SH: All right. You actually got to meet him before the war ended, I take it.

LM: Yes, right, yes. ...

SH: Did they say why they were transferring you to the 106th?

LM: No. They didn't say why. No, there were others who were transferred, too, you know. ... Well, you never know.

SH: Because the war was not over; it was February and there was still a lot of fighting going on.

LM: Yes.

SH: The surgeons that were fired on by the snipers were actually with the 106th.

LM: Yes.

SH: Now that the war was over in Europe, were you concerned that you might be sent to the Pacific, because some of the troops were?

LM: Well, yes, they were getting us ready for that. ... So, I mean, when the war was over, they were training us, and so on, and so forth, but, before they got us fully trained, ... [in] August, the bomb was dropped, and that was [the end of the war]. [Editor's Note: The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the 6th and 9th of August 1945 brought about V-J Day on August 14th.] Then, they didn't know what to do with us, really, because they had so many folks.

SH: Even though you were part of the Army of Occupation, you were actually being trained ...

LM: Well, we didn't even know that phrase, "Army of Occupation."

SH: Really? That is interesting to know.

LM: ... No, we were being transferred because the unit was no longer needed, you know, to be in a war mode, and so on, and so forth, and there were general hospitals, you know, to be staffed, but not [in] the numbers that we had, you know, built up to.

SH: When the war was over, then, you became part of a general hospital unit.

LM: Well, it's not a general. Well, I mean, I never had [regular duty there?]. When I was put in another hospital, that was being broken down, for a short time, I was in charge of the operating room, you know, just crazy stuff like that, and then, another challenge. ... You know, it was just kind of trying to get over, over serving, I mean, trying to get a chance to get out of there, you know. They didn't try to urge us to stay on as, you know, long-range Army, ... because there were just too many of us, you know, yes.

SH: Really? That is good to know as well.

LM: No, you know, to be regular Army.

SH: Thanks to all your training, you would be a prime candidate.

LM: Well, yes, but they didn't [need us; there was] not the need.

SH: When you were sent to Austria, was that where you were in charge of the operating room? Do you remember?

LM: No, it was after that.

SH: Then, you went to Czechoslovakia.

LM: ... Yes.

SH: Was that the same thing?

LM: Well, I can't even remember exactly when all this took place. I know the sequence, but I don't know when. You needed X amount of points to get out, and so on. They were first training us, yes, like I said, after the war's over over there, and that was May, and then, ... I didn't get home until, like, November, December. ...

SH: Were you able to do any traveling once the war was over and you were not part of an evacuation hospital? Did they let you go visit different places?

LM: Well, yes, but you didn't know how to get there and things, or there were just too many folks, too many of the same thing, of people, you know. There were no tourist attractions.

SH: What about the displaced persons?

LM: I don't know.

SH: Did you ever have to deal with any of them?

LM: No, no.

SH: When were you first aware of the concentration camps?

LM: Well, it was, well, after May the 8th, you know. That's as near as I can tell you, after that.

SH: You were not aware of them until after the war was over.

LM: ... No, no, I didn't know what was happening with the Jewish [people].

SH: Did you go and see them or did people come and tell you about them? How did you know about them?

LM: Well, it may have been [in] some of the [magazines], like the *Stars and Stripes* or one of those, you know, that had something in it. I don't remember how we knew, but we knew they [the perpetrators of the Holocaust] were bad people. ... I know that we even had some Jewish folks in our outfit, and so on, and so forth, but I don't know anything. ... If I could think back that far, you know, but, at the time, I don't know.

SH: We know from having looked at the wonderful memorabilia that you have that there was also a small candy dish that came from Hitler's ...

LM: Oh, that one, that [came from] Hitler's hideout, yes.

SH: Can you tell us about visiting that and what you saw?

LM: Well, this is after the war and they took us to see the Berchtesgaden, [Adolf Hitler's Bavarian mountain retreat] and we were taken up ... in jeeps. ... Around this mountain, it's really a road made with slave labor, you know, the stones, and so on, and you got up to a certain point and they had to get out of the truck and get into small vehicles to go the rest of the way up, because it was too narrow. ... When you get to the top, then, Berchtesgaden's up there, but there's like a hundred steps or more to get up to ... where the viewing area was, you know, with the porch all the way around. ... Since we were officers, we were put in ... the elevator, and the same elevator driver was the driver that had driven it for Hitler, and he didn't say anything to us, but we were told that that was he. ... He took us up to where we went into the private quarters and, of course, there wasn't a guide, you know, ... pointing out this and that, but we could walk around, do what we wanted to do, and we saw his [retreat]. The big dining areas, and so on, oh, it was as long as this house, you know, and, yes, there were chairs all around, and so on, and then, the pantries were just loaded with dishes and glassware and everything, and so on. ... Then, [when] you go further in, like, you come across, you know, like a dental [area], a fully stocked dental area, and then, another one would be like an emergency [medical] department, you know, with everything you need for [medical needs]. So, he had it well-stocked and everything, but he wasn't there, [laughter] and so, when we were in this pantry thing, why, I wasn't the only one that found that, I mean, those [dishes]. I was just fascinated with this glass dish, because it's so thin on the edges, and then, it gets thicker, and [I] found out that it fit between the helmet and helmet liner. ... Then, you can put it on and your head was a little heavier, but ... it didn't come out or anything. It just stayed up there between those two, and so, I did. I wasn't the only one who did it [laughter] and, of course, there was glassware, I mean,

glasses, [and more] glasses, and so on, but I was just pleased to have one thing [laughter] to remember him by. [laughter] ... When one of my grandchildren said, "That was stealing, Grandma," I said, "Yes, but he owed it to me," and I [know] that's a poor excuse. [laughter]

SH: As you said, if you read Ambrose's book, he talked about that. I think you are okay.

LM: Yes. [laughter]

SH: You also got a trip to the Riviera.

LM: Oh, yes. We had seven days down there and everything was free, you know, and we could just go and do [everything]. We were very, very privileged, and I can't think of the little things that you rode, like you're doing a bicycle in the water, you know.

SH: Like a paddle boat-type thing?

LM: Yes. I guess that was what it was, and I'd never been around water that much, because we didn't have a pool or anything at home, you know, on the farm, but I was impressed. ... Then, the entertainment, you know, at night, and so on, was all free and everything, and the only thing that you're probably thinking that I wrote about was ... when we tried to get home, back up to Munich, you know, and there wasn't any room on the planes that were going up. So, we had to spend still another night [there], and we were fed well and everything, you know. [laughter] Everything was free. ... When they did get a plane, the second day we were trying to get back to Munich, why, the guy said, towards the evening, and we'd waited all day, ... "We've pieced together a plane. We're going to take you back." [laughter] ... I'd only had one plane ride and that was going down [to] the Riviera, and so, we get on the plane and it's just the seats on the outside, no seatbelts, no anything, and I rode by the emergency door. ... There was this big toolkit there, like the three different layers of tools, and I'm not sure why I thought that would be a good seat, [laughter] in an emergency, but, anyway, we got up okay. ... I was relaxing a little bit and the GI came back. It wasn't the pilot; it's whatever this other guy is up front there. I don't know anything about planes yet, but, [at] any rate, he comes back and he's rooting around through the toolbox and I just said, "Is there a problem?" and he said, "This plane is falling apart and I can't find what I need to fix it." [laughter] ... I said prayers, and he went back up and sat down and we landed back in Munich, in just good shape, and I was very thankful, among other things.

SH: You were probably glad for the *Mauretania* rather than [taking] a plane ride back to the United States.

LM: [laughter] You got it.

SH: You said that they did not encourage you to stay in, but talk about how hard it was to wait to finally get to come home.

LM: Well, they had us doing different [tasks] in different areas of nursing and we didn't have the patients that [we normally would have]. You know, I mean, it was a lot of just making believe

that we were needed, and we really weren't, you know, but they didn't know what else to do with us, you know, and there were too many, and so on, and so forth, and so, I was very, very happy to be able to get on a boat, a ship or whatever.

SH: You talked about the entertainment in the Riviera. Were there ever any opportunities for you to attend a USO show?

LM: ... I don't know whether there was any USO shows. I never went to a USO show, the whole time I was over there. I'm not saying there weren't any there, but I [did not attend any].

SH: Did they have movies? That was a lot of people to keep busy or entertained until they can ship you back. Was there anything you did? Did you go to the movies?

LM: Well, actually ...

SH: Was there an officers' club?

LM: There was, but I wasn't into dancing or any of that stuff, you know. Many of the nurses were, but I'm [different], you know, grew up in a farm, never went to a party ... or had a date or anything, you know, and so, I was, you know, kind of a loner there. ... So, I just did the best I could, hung out, read, things like that. [laughter]

SH: What were your dreams? What did you think you were going to do when you got back home?

LM: No idea, no idea, but it was a problem, because I didn't have my driver's license and we were seven miles out of any town, when I got home, and fifty miles from a hospital, eighty miles from where I went to nursing school.

SH: After having gone through this experience, you still wanted to be a nurse. There was no point where you thought, "I have had enough of this. I want a change."

LM: ... No, because that was my life's work, you know, like my sister was a schoolteacher and I was a nurse, and there wasn't anything I could do out there in the boonies, where we lived, [laughter] which is true.

SH: That is what I wondered, if you doubted that at any point, after having seen so much, because your patients had to have been in extremely bad shape, sometimes, when you saw them.

LM: Oh, yes.

SH: Did you ever think, "Why did I ever think I wanted to be a nurse?"

LM: No. I've always felt that that was my calling and that was what I should do and never, I guess never doubted myself, because a lot of times, you do [say to yourself], you know, "So, why'd I do this?" [laughter]

SH: We heard the story of how you and your husband connected again and married, and then, you moved here to Annandale. Where did you nurse after you came here?

LM: Well, ... I did a little private duty when I first came here, but ... I had to change my RN from Pennsylvania to New Jersey, and so on. That turned out not to be a problem, and I was able to fill in the time, because my husband had a big family around here, you know, and so on, and so forth. ... I did take care of two different home cases, you know, that I was very involved with, one in town, well, both of them, actually, were in town, and that took some time, and I wasn't even sure what I wanted to do. I, you know, got my RN changed, so, I was current. ... That was in '46 and, of course, ... then, I had the child and everything, and then, we eventually moved over here. ... I wasn't one that would work, and I didn't really ever do anything except occasional private duty, when ... I was having a family, and, you know, I just stayed home, ... or else took a home case or something, something in town, that I'd go and give medicines or give baths, or something like that, but, no, I, you know, didn't have to and was fortunate there. My husband, of course, had to have two jobs, and sometimes three, [laughter] but that was the way it was.

SH: I am sorry that we did not get an opportunity to conduct his oral history as well. It would have been wonderful.

LM: Oh, yes, right.

SH: When the war was completely over, when the Japanese surrendered, was there any reaction in Europe?

LM: Not that I know of, no, because that was another area, and we didn't have the television, and so on. Everybody wasn't as aware of what was going on in other countries as we are today. Today is completely different.

SH: When did you get your orders for home? Was it in November, you said?

LM: Yes, and, of course, I just got out at Fort Dix. I went over from Kilmer and came back [to Fort Dix].

SH: You were in Czechoslovakia, in Marienbad, right?

LM: Yes.

SH: Where did they send you next?

LM: Well, then, I was back in France. ... I can't even remember, you know, Czechoslovakia; I was only there very briefly.

SH: Okay.

LM: Yes, and then, I was ... transferred to the 67th Evac. I mean, all this was, like, just kind of winding down. They didn't know what to do with you, and I was back in France and, as soon as the points were [high enough], I had enough points, I was sent home. ...

SH: Was the 67th near Paris or was it part of what they called "the cigarette camps?" There was Camp Lucky Strike and Camp Chesterfield, and so forth.

LM: I don't even know about those, no, [laughter] [that is] something I don't know about, but, [at] any rate, ... into France, it was blah. I didn't get back to Paris or anything like that, you know. I'm not just sure of what part of ... France it was, and, as I said, I didn't have a diary then or anything. ...

SH: We are going to have to transcribe those letters.

LM: Yes.

SH: That is great. On the trip back, how many of you were there? What was the trip back on the *Mauretania* like, much faster?

LM: Well, I didn't know, you know. ... I didn't have a lot of friends or anything. It was probably faster, but I never really paid that much attention when I was going over. I just knew we were out at sea and, well, dates and times didn't [laughter] mean that much, or I wasn't that aware, and, unfortunately, you know, I wasn't keeping a daily diary then.

SH: Where did they send you to, to New York?

LM: Back here? Well, ... we landed up ... in Massachusetts, and then, they put us on a train and we went down to Camp Kilmer, or Fort Dix, and that's where I was discharged. ... It didn't take that long, coming back.

SH: Did you take the train back out to Rimersburg, or to close by?

LM: Yes, yes, took that, and then, my family, they all came down, too, the ones that were home. Well, [I] don't know whether my sister [did], my dad, I know, and Mother, and maybe it was just [them], but, [at] any rate, ... I remember going home. When I got to Pittsburgh, I had this aunt and uncle that I went to right away there, and then, Mother and Dad, they came. I'd been in touch with them by letter, and they came down and took me home and I remember that. I'm not a good sleeper, but I remember the first night I was home, it was almost noon when I woke up the next day.

JO: I can imagine.

LM: I just, apparently, was very relaxed.

SH: It might have been too quiet for you at that point.

LM: It might have been, oh, dear.

SH: Thank you so much.

LM: Oh, you're very, very welcome.

SH: You have just been marvelous.

LM: Well, I don't know. [laughter] It seems like I've been less than that.

JO: You have wonderful stories and it was great speaking with you.

SH: We thank you.

LM: Oh, you're very welcome.

[Addendum by Robert Manning, February 2013]

Robert Manning: Lois Rimer and Bradley Manning--after both were discharged late in 1945--were engaged in February 1946 and married June 9, 1946. Lois moved to New Jersey with Bradley and their first child, Robert, was born May 30, 1947. Ruth Manning was born November 13, 1949, Janice Manning born January 19, 1955 and Richard Manning December 12, 1957. In 1949 they purchased their home at 23 Maple Ave, Annandale, NJ where Bradley passed away May 29, 1987 and Lois passed away February 20, 2012. Both passed away in the same bedroom.

Lois' love of traveling was a passion she possessed. Her goal after her WWII service was to visit all seven continents, the last being Antarctica. Lois visited Europe, especially France, at least three times, tracing the route that her Evacuation Hospital traveled in 1944-45. The last time was in June 2009 when she went with her granddaughter, Michelle Manning. The tour group included twenty-three veterans of WWII and Lois was selected to join Barack and Michelle Obama on stage for the 65th Anniversary of D-Day on June 6, 2009.

Lois passed in 2012, two weeks from her 90th birthday. She was and continues to be an inspiration for her four children, eight grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Ellie MacPherson 10/06/2008

Reviewed by Jessica Ondusko 1/12/2009

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 11/24/2009

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 11/26/2009

Reviewed by Robert Manning 2/26/2013