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# VOICES OF THE PAST

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BG ANNA MAE HAYS ORAL HISTORY

KOREAN WAR

1983

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*The following excerpt is from the oral history of Brigadier General Anna Mae Hays, collected for the US Army Senior Officer Oral History Program in 1983. Interview conducted by Col. Amelia J. Carson. The complete oral history is housed as part of the Anna Mae Hays collection at the US Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA.*

INTERVIEWER: The Korean Conflict broke out in July of 1950, and you were reassigned to the 4th Field Hospital. How did you get from Fort Myer to your destination in Korea?

BG HAYS: Well, first of all, I traveled again with Captain Kitty Jump. We left Fort Myer and went south to Fort Benning, Georgia, which was the staging area for the 4th Field Hospital. We went through various exercises such as testing our equipment, as one does in a staging area, and learning to know each other. I think there were 31 nurses in our Unit. There should have been that number in a Field Hospital. Then, after a period of two or three weeks, we went by train to California and then by ship to Japan. When we got to Japan, we were assigned to an area in the country which has since become the large Camp Zama. While there we received more equipment and I remember very clearly testing our field autoclaves. I remember that one of our two autoclaves didn't have a gasket. That would have been just horrendous had we gone into combat without being able to use one of our field autoclaves. We probably stayed in Camp Zama a very short time. The Conflict was moving very rapidly. As soon as a convoy to Korea was formed in late August or early September of 1950, we joined it and sailed around the southern part of the Korean peninsula, up the western coast, and entered the Inchon harbor. We were out in the harbor between the U.S.S. Missouri and land when the ship fired over us on the North Koreans, who were around the Inchon area. At that time, the Marines entered Inchon. We landed about 15 days later using landing crafts when the tide lowered. I don't know if you know much about Inchon but think it had a 30-foot tide. I think another medical unit was with us -- probably a medical battalion. We went into the first building we saw, and someone said, "The nurses can sleep here." And, it was filled with excreta. I remember taking my shovel, cleaning out this excreta, and putting down my canvas bedding roll. We didn't have a soft bedding roll like you have today. And, we stayed there a night or two. By that time, the forward party had found an old school to use for our hospital and we set up the hospital wards, operating room, etc.

INTERVIEWER: What was it like as the operating room supervisor in one of the first hospitals to arrive in-country after the invasion?

BG HAYS: Yes; we were one of the first medical units to arrive in the Inchon area. As you probably have read, there was an evacuation hospital at the time in the Pusan area. You'll recall that the North Koreans fought our soldiers in the southern part of the peninsula and surrounded them. General Douglas MacArthur then decided he would have the Army approach from the western side and later envelop the enemy. So, we were the first hospital to set up in

Inchon, and then move in toward Seoul. It was really quite an experience. It's difficult to explain. If you would ask me what are the first things you can remember about Korea, I would say its cold weather, odor, and its stark-nakedness. It had nothing. And, when I compare Korea with my experiences in World War II, I think of Korea as even worse than the jungle in World War II, because of the lack of supplies, lack of warmth, etc., in the operating room. We had some evacuation of combat casualties to our hospital via helicopter but not the mass evacuation which occurred in Vietnam. Most patients arrived by ambulance or train.