
VOICES OF THE PAST

BG ANNA MAE HAYS ORAL HISTORY

1983

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: With this increase of nurses, what did you do to enhance their careers and encourage them to stay in the Army Nurse Corps?

BG HAYS: Maybe we can touch on a few of the highlights. In 1967, Major Doris S. Frazier (later Colonel) became the first nurse to attend the Resident Course at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The nurses felt they were really becoming part of the Army structure, which I thought was very important. We worked on obtaining spaces for Army nurses in the senior service schools and were successful. We also assigned two nurses for career-planning purposes to the Office of the Chief. Later, that function was integrated into the Assignment Branch of Personnel and Training Directorate. That Branch later became the Career Activities Branch. So, nurses knew that their professional careers would be closely followed. They knew that someone was paying attention to their desires and watching their career progression in a specific MOS (Military Occupational Specialty). We got minimum standards established for occupancy of a BOQ (Bachelor Officers' Quarters). I remember that when I lived in the BOQ, even as late as 1956 in Delano Hall at Walter Reed, I had a room so small I could hardly move around, and it had one very, very small closet. The size of the room was due to the fact that I had a dependent mother. So, minimum standards for occupancy were established and authorized, and we considered that a real victory. Then, later, the furnishings for each room in a BOQ were defined which helps a great deal. In 1967, legislation was passed by the 90th Congress which removed the restrictions on the career of a female officer, a very important step to enhance careers.

BG HAYS: This legislation permitted the same promotional opportunities to the female Army Nurse Corps officer as was available to the Army male officer without regard to artificial restriction. I think we will probably be discussing that legislation later on because that was a great day for the Army Nurse Corps. And then in 1968 or so, DA published a pamphlet, Career Planning for Army Commissioned Officers. This was very good because it provided broad guidance in career development and utilization. When this went out to the field, the Army nurse realized more than ever that he or she indeed had a plan for her own career, and that the Army Nurse Corps officers in the Office of the Chief of the Army Nurse Corps and the Personnel and Training Directorate were paying attention to individual career needs. Later on, in 1970, we started talking about maternity leave in the form of ordinary and excess leave for female officers. This was finally authorized by Army Regulation in January 1970. Of course, at that time it was for the married officer. I believe that has changed since I have retired to include single parents. I must say, I was one of those primarily responsible for the initial change, along with Colonel

Jeanne Holmes (later Major General) of the Air Force. But, I'm not sure it was one of the best moves that I made as Chief of the Army Nurse Corps. We had, and I'm sure there still are, married Army nurses with children who greatly contributed toward accomplishing the mission of the Army Medical Department. We felt that if a nurse were pregnant, she should not have to leave the Army Nurse Corps if, indeed, she would put the Army first and make arrangements for her children to be taken care of in the event of mobilization. During my last year in office, the civilian husband of an Army nurse was allowed to have PX and commissary privileges. We felt, with all these many changes, that the professional and personal opportunities for our male and female Army Nurse Corps officers were approaching parity with other Army offices, and it was very satisfying. It's very difficult to think of everything that might have occurred during my tour as Chief that would enhance one's career or encourage a nurse to remain in the Army. I remember, just before I retired, that we were proposing to make a change in the Military Occupational Specialty codes. The prefix denoted clinical competency, and by that time, as you will recall, we had several nurses holding the A prefix which was the highest prefix. I hope we will discuss that a little bit later. We were thinking about a suffix which would denote a specific area, such as medical or surgical intensive nursing care. I guess we were just dreaming that everything would be computerized one day and then when we would need X number of nurses according to specific requirements, we would know where they were assigned, their preparation, etc. For example, in time of mobilization, all data could be obtained by just pressing a little button. Another project that we started in 1969, and we were working quite hard on it when I retired, was known as the Army Nurse Corps Plans and Programs Study. We were trying to study the civilian/military ratio and the male/female ratio in the Army Nurse Corps. We were studying the entire MOS structure, analyzing that specifically, and reviewing all of our educational programs to be sure that they met our needs. Also, we were studying the utilization of all members of the nursing team, not just Army Nurse Corps officers, but civilian nurses and enlisted men and women. Two nurses were assigned to the Special Projects Office to assist in that structural analysis program.

INTERVIEWER: General Hays, you mentioned the utilization of male nurses. What percentage of male nurses do we have in the Army Nurse Corps?

BG HAYS: Well, when I was Chief, it varied. It was about 22 to 24 percent, and when I retired in 1971, it was 22 percent.

INTERVIEWER: How many male nurses were there in the civilian sector, do you recall the percentage of this?

BG HAYS: Nationally, there was less than 2 percent. We averaged, as I said, around 22 to 24 percent.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a lot of married couples that you had to coordinate assignments for?

BG HAYS: That was an ever-present problem, of course. I think Colonel Jeanne Treacy, who headed the Career Activities Branch and her staff did very, very well in coordinating the assignments. We did have a lot of people who were married. When I was Assistant Chief of the

Army Nurse Corps we had about 9 percent of the females married, and it kept increasing. By the time I was Chief, it was 12 percent. I don't remember the figure when I retired, but it was somewhere in the neighborhood of 12 to 15 percent. Quite naturally we had to consider the female who was married, and her dependents, in many of our decisions. Most of our men were married. That ranged, as I recall, about 60 to 70 percent.

INTERVIEWER: You referred to the legislation in 1967 the restrictions on promotion opportunities. Could you reflect a little bit on what happened during this legislation?

BG HAYS: PL 90-130 removed the restrictions on the numbers of Regular Army colonels and lieutenant colonels in the Army Nurse Corps. It also made it possible for the Chief to serve as a general officer. For example, Title 10 United States Code, which governed the office of the Chief of the Army Nurse Corps, stated that the Chief of the Army Nurse Corps would serve at the pleasure of the President for a four-year statutory tour in the grade of colonel. The 1967 legislation removed "in the grade of colonel." So, one of the first things we had to do was change that Section in Title 10, which we did rather rapidly. While we were doing that we also inserted another paragraph which pertained to the Assistant Chief of the Army Nurse Corps no longer being selected by the Chief of the Corps but rather by a Board. We did not state a four-year statutory tour for the Assistant Chief, but it was expected that he or she would serve the majority of the time with the Chief. Actually, that 1967 legislation was a giant step forward for our Corps. I can recall when I was Assistant Chief I worked with the American Nurses' Association, the Chief of the Women's Army Corps, and other individuals, trying to get some legislation whereby Army Nurse Corps officers would be treated as other Army officers insofar their as promotion opportunities. It wasn't easy. Several bills were passed earlier, or introduced, I should say, into the House and the Senate. Some of the US senators and representatives who helped us were Mendell Rivers, Richard Russell, Richard Schweiker, and Strom Thurmond. I'm sure you recognize those names. But, nothing passed until 1967.

INTERVIEWER: You said it was a big day, in what respect, other than just the passing of the legislation?

BG HAYS: Well, it was a big day, because, first of al, President Lyndon Johnson desired a lot of publicity on the event. We were all invited to the White House to watch him sign the bill. "We" meaning many of the senior male officers and the Directors of the Women's Services in the Department of Defense. I can recall, as the senior female officer, that I was called upon to read the citation when a Legion of Merit was presented to one of our Army nurses who had just returned from Vietnam. I just couldn't believe that I, just little me, was reading a citation in the East Room of the White House. It went along quite fine because had rehearsed it several times at home. But, I had only been notified the night before. So, I didn't have much time to get very nervous. President Johnson gave the Chiefs the various pens which were used in signing the legislation. I sent my pen to the Army Medical Museum at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.