



U. S. Army Air Corps

TEA IN THE NURSES HOME, BARKSDALE FIELD, LOUISIANA

Army Nursing

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SINCE 1775, when the colonies first began their struggle for independence from England, the Army has felt the need for trained medical attention. In 1818, to meet this need, the Medical Department as it exists today, was first organized. From then to now, during time of peace or war's emergency, the Department has provided efficient medical service for the entire personnel of the United States Army. It has numbered in the ranks of its officers men eminent in medical science and research, acknowledged leaders in all branches of the profession.

In those early days, in addition to the ever urgent need for doctors, there was also the need for nursing care other than that given by the men detailed from the ranks or hired for the purpose. Therefore a request was made of the Continental

Congress early in the Revolutionary War to employ women to nurse the sick and wounded. This was authorized and women did serve as nurses with the Continental Army. They were of course untrained, their duties many and varied, but they performed a worth-while service to the fighting men in that first great crisis of our nation's history.

With the close of the Revolutionary War the woman nurse as well as the man soldier returned home, the woman to her spinning wheel, the man to his plow, and not again until the Civil War was the need for woman's service as a nurse felt. Then she volunteered and more than 3,000 were appointed to the many army hospitals.

However, real and permanent recognition was not given such service until

the Spanish-American War. Immediately following the declaration of war, the Secretary of War, the Surgeon General, and even the President, were besieged with applications from thousands of women offering their services as nurses whenever and wherever needed. To Dr. Anita Newcomb McGee, who later became Acting Assistant Surgeon, U. S. Army, was assigned the Herculean task of selecting a corps of trained nurses and organizing them into an efficient war-time unit. How well she organized and directed is reflected in the story of the thousands of nurses she sent to camp hospitals, to Cuba, to Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines. Although the war was of short duration, the nurses proved themselves, becoming indispensable to army surgeons. A few years later, February 2, 1901, the Army Nurse Corps became an integral part of the Medical Department.

When the United States entered the

World War in April 1917, the Nurse Corps numbered but 403. Immediately a nation-wide call for nurses was made through the American Red Cross Nursing Service and other nursing organizations and the response of the profession was amazing. Nearly 22,000 served at home and abroad, and more than 10,000 of them were attached to camp, base, evacuation, and field hospitals of the British and American Expeditionary Forces, and on hospital trains and transports. Many received citation and mention in special orders of the French and British governments, as well as their own, and some were decorated for their services.

In 1920, members of the Corps were given relative rank of officers, from second lieutenant to major, and authorized to wear the insignia of their rank. Also at this time most of the rights and privileges of commissioned officers were accorded them, one of the greatest benefits



RECENTLY MEMBERS OF THE ARMY NURSE CORPS HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO AIR CORPS STATIONS

bestowed being that of taking courses at civilian institutions on full pay and allowances. Retirement for age and length of service, and retirement for disability are now provided for members of the Corps. Dignified new quarters, comfortably and tastefully furnished, with pleasant working conditions, are the rule at the majority of stations.

At present army nurses are on duty at forty-five stations in the United States, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines. In the past two years, to meet army expansion plans, the numerical strength of the corps has been materially increased, nurses have been assigned to many new stations, and it is contemplated sending them to yet others at which heretofore they have not been stationed.

To be eligible for appointment an applicant must be a young woman of good character, unmarried, a citizen of the United States, between the age of 22 and

30 years, at least 60 inches tall, and of standard weight for her age and height. She must be an accredited high school graduate, a graduate of a nursing school of approved standards, registered, and a member of the American Nurses Association. Her physical fitness is determined by a thorough examination by a board of medical officers at the army post nearest her home. The trip thereto is made at her own expense.

The Army Nurse Corps, as a part of the military establishment, is governed by army regulations. These are formulated by the different staff corps and arms of the service and published from time to time by the War Department at Washington. Those for the Medical Department are prepared by the Surgeon General and his staff. It is important that the new appointee familiarize herself with these for by these her future life is governed. While it is one duty of a chief nurse to instruct her, it is the nurse's direct responsibility to study and understand "regulations" that she may measure up to all that is expected of her, and all that she hopes to be.

Civilian nurses often hesitate to join the army because they "do not want to enlist for three years." Nurses do *not* enlist. They are appointed by the Surgeon General with the approval of the Secretary of War. At the time of appointment, the nurse agrees to serve three years. However, she may resign from the Corps upon her own request for good and sufficient reasons, and the most common one is marriage.

The army nurse must be versatile, must think and act quickly in any emergency; must be willing and ready to do duty in diet kitchen, operating room, obstetrical, or psychiatric ward if and when needed. She must have confidence in herself and be able to make the doctor feel and recognize that confidence. Seldom is she closely supervised for it is assumed that any nurse acceptable to the



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AT TRIPLER GENERAL HOSPITAL, HAWAII

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EXTRA CURRICULAR LIFE, FORT RILEY, KANSAS

Army Nurse Corps is conscientious enough, with pride enough in herself, her profession, and her training school to carry on to the best of her ability without supervision. Unfortunately however, as in other organizations and institutions, the Corps is not without those who fall by the wayside, but these unfortunate ones are few and in the end the losers.

It is important for the young nurse entering the Corps to realize that it is an open field, that only her own limitations will retard her progress and advancement. The standards of the Corps have ever been high, keeping pace with those set by the nursing profession. To maintain this standard is the responsibility of each and every member of the Corps.

Army nursing has many advantages. The rate of pay authorized by law for the

nurse entering the service is \$840 a year and maintenance. There are pay increases every three years for nine years when the maximum of \$1560 a year is reached. Accumulative leave of absence, with pay, of 30 days for each completed year of service, not exceeding however 120 days in any calendar year is provided. The nurse entering the service has the relative rank of second lieutenant. She is given an annual physical examination and, when sick, medical care and hospitalization. Advantages for recreation are many and varied, horseback riding, golf, tennis, swimming and bowling, all are available; one needs but make a choice. For the nurse who desires to travel, the army offers much.

The Army Nurse Corps, as any other walk of life, may have some defects, and none knows them better than we who are a part of it, but we also know its advantages, opportunities, and possibilities, and because of our confidence in it and its future, we are eager to attract to its service the best type of nurse to work for it with us. The nurse with high ideals, the nurse who will fight for these ideals, will overcome difficulties to make these ideals come true, so that the man who stands ready to meet his country's call, shall, in his hour of need, have the best that nursing care can give.

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