

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

Today

THEY PLAYED AN INDISPENSABLE PART
WOMEN AT CAMP WHITE

MEDFORD WOMAN'S ATLANTIC ORDEAL
SHE SAILED ON THE LUSITANIA

A POEM'S POIGNANCE STARTED IT ALL
POPPIES SIGNIFY SACRIFICE

NOVEMBER 2000
Vol. 2, No. 11

The Magazine of the Southern Oregon Historical Society 

The Ship's Not Sinking!

by Bill Miller

I'm dying, Dorothy Conner remembered thinking to herself. Unable to resist the pull that seemed to be taking her to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, she had given up. Just a half-hour before, Conner had been enjoying lunch with her brother-in-law, Dr. Howard Fisher. It was May 7, 1915, and the two were sailing first class aboard the elegant British Cunard ocean liner *Lusitania*. The ship was six days out from New York harbor, and was due to arrive in Liverpool, England, the next day, where Conner would join an English unit of the Red Cross and travel to Belgium as a volunteer nurse. With the voyage so uneventful and the weather so beautiful, it was difficult to believe that war had engulfed much of Europe.¹

As Conner waited for Fisher to finish his meal, their conversation was broken by an explosion—caused by a German torpedo—that sent a shudder from the bowels of the ship. Instantly the vessel began to list to the right and Conner and Fisher joined the frantic crowd struggling up three flights of stairs to the main deck. With Conner waiting on the high side of the deck, Fisher went below and found two life jackets floating in a flooded passageway. When he returned, they stood in line and watched in horror as two lifeboats, filled with passengers, struck the water and overturned. Then, one of the crew shouted, “The ship's not sinking! There is no danger!” With those words barely spoken, the *Lusitania* rolled over, and Conner was thrown into the sea. Now she was struggling underwater, tangled in ropes and debris, being sucked deeper along with the sinking ship. Hope turned to resignation. She was going to die, she later remembered thinking, and lost consciousness.²

Word of the sinking reached Medford in time for the afternoon newspapers. In a futile attempt to keep the news from Conner's mother, friends took her to lunch at the Medford Hotel. The widow Katherine Conner had brought Dorothy to the Rogue Valley in 1913 and built a house on fifty-five acres of land northeast of Jacksonville. They joined Katherine's son, Boudinot Conner, who had already purchased a 200-acre orchard near Lower Table Rock. The Conners were members of the colony of wealthy easterners who came to the valley early in the century, seeking to increase their fortunes by becoming orchardists. Family members seldom made news, and for the most part, quietly participated within their social circle.³

As the chaos of the sinking unfolded around her, Dorothy Conner felt a firm pull on her arms. She was barely conscious, but thought she heard a kindly voice say, “How can I make room for you little lady?” Strangers placed her in the middle of an overturned inflatable raft and picked the seaweed from her hair and wiped ship's oil from her face. She drifted in and out of consciousness for the next few hours as she was hauled from boat to boat. Finally a minesweeper took her to Kinsale, Ireland, where late in the evening, she wired her mother in Medford that she was alive. The next morning she was reunited with Fisher.

Champion golfer Chandler Egan dances with Dorothy Conner, circa 1914.

Conner returned to Medford later that year, and even cohosted a Christmas Day party with her mother. In August 1917, her brother Boudinot left Medford to serve as a first lieutenant in the Army. Dorothy married a captain in the Navy, and friends lost track of her while she was living at Coronado Naval Station near San Diego, California. By 1925, Katherine Conner had returned to Washington, D.C., selling her Jackson County property to Archibald Livingston and his sister, Anna.⁴

The German torpedo that struck the *Lusitania* had taken the lives of 1,198 people—128 of them Americans—and edged the United States closer to war. But history is more than numbers, dates and consequences. It's also the daily life of everyday people. For the Conners, two of their family were still alive, and for them, little else mattered. ■

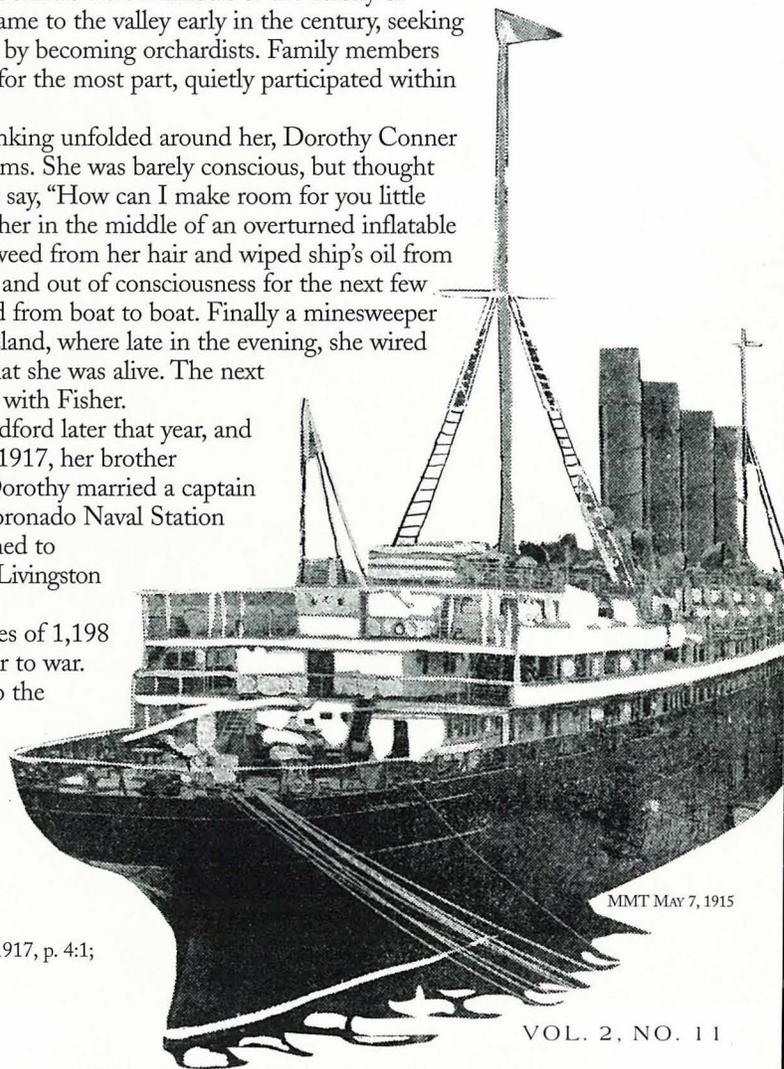
Bill Miller is a library assistant with the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

ENDNOTES

1. Medford *Mail Tribune*, 7 May 1915, p. 1:7; Medford *Sun*, 8 May 1915, p. 6:5.
2. Medford *Sun*, 1 June 1915, p. 6:3; 23 June 1915, p. 2:3.
3. *Jackson County Deeds*, v. 71, p. 425; v. 101, p. 100.
4. Medford *Sun*, 28 December 1915, p. 2:3; Medford *Mail Tribune*, 20 August 1917, p. 4:1; SOHS OH-132, p.30; *Jackson County Deeds*, v. 157, p. 449.



SOHS #18077



MMT MAY 7, 1915

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE TODAY

Editorial Guidelines

Feature articles average 3,000 to 4,000 (pre-edited) words. Other materials range from 500 to 1,000 words. Electronic submissions are accepted on 3-1/4-inch disks and should be accompanied by a hard-copy printout. Cite all sources and construct endnotes and cutlines using the Chicago Manual of Style. The author is responsible for verification of cited facts. A selection of professional, unscreened photographs and/or line art should accompany submission—black-and-white or color. The Southern Oregon Historical Society reserves the right to use Society images in place of submitted material. All material should be labeled with author's name, mailing address, and telephone number. Manuscripts will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope stamped with sufficient postage. Authors should provide a brief autobiographical note at the end of manuscripts.

The Southern Oregon Historical Society secures rights to full and final editing of all manuscripts, layout design, and one-time North American serial rights. Authors will be notified of acceptance of manuscripts within ninety days of receiving materials. In most cases, payment is upon publication. Southern Oregon Heritage Today takes great care with all submitted material, but is not responsible for damage or loss. Only photocopies of irreplaceable original historical documents should be submitted. Facts, views, and opinions expressed in signed submissions are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints or opinions of Southern Oregon Heritage Today or the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE Today

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PHOTO COURTESY DOUG FOSTER

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PHOTO COURTESY DONN L. TODT



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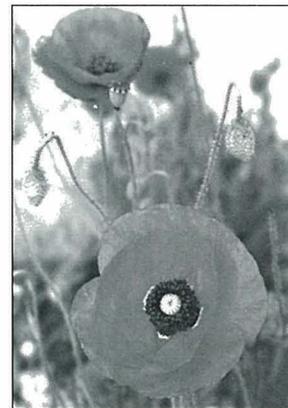


PHOTO COURTESY DONN L. TODT

ON THE COVER Wild poppies that sprang up over the graves and killing fields of France and Belgium in World War I have become a symbol of remembrance of the sacrifices of war.



Southern Oregon Historical Society

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Magazine Staff Cynthia Wicklund, COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR Bill Powell, GUEST EDITOR Dana L. Hedrick, DESIGNER/PHOTOGRAPHER

Collections/Research Library Staff Mary Ames Sheret, CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITS Jacque Sundstrand, LIBRARY/ARCHIVES COORDINATOR Carol Harbison-Samuels, LIBRARY MANAGER/PHOTO ARCHIVIST William Alley, ARCHIVIST/HISTORIAN Bill Miller, LIBRARY ASSISTANT

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Veterans Day Poppies

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our places; and in the sky...*

JOHN McCRAE

by Nan Hannon & Donn L. Todt

For almost eighty years, wearing a paper poppy on Veterans Day has signaled respect for the soldiers who suffered through the wars of the twentieth century. The corn poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*) represented the wildflowers—daisies, poppies and bachelor's buttons—that grew in the cratered French battlefields and muddy cemeteries where the bodies of millions of European and American soldiers rested after the first modern war.

During World War I, Col. John McCrae, a Canadian medical officer, treated casualties after the carnage of the second battle of Ypres. Horrified by the slaughter, McCrae wrote a short poem linking the brief lives of the young men to the brief lives of the wild annual poppies that sprang up on their graves. He sent his poem, "In Flanders Fields," to the British publication *Punch*, which printed it anonymously in 1915. This poignant poem from the front received worldwide attention. It so touched a young American YMCA worker in Georgia that she vowed to wear a poppy each day in honor of the soldiers cut down in the war.

In 1921, the British Legion was formed to assist veterans disabled by the Great War. Casting about for fund-raising ideas, the Legion heard about the American woman's use of the poppy as an emblem honoring veterans and saw samples of artificial poppies made by her friends. The Legion decided to sell artificial poppies on Armistice Day—November 11. That first year, they took in more than £100,000 from poppy sales. Canadian and American veterans' organizations took up poppy sales, and the scarlet poppy became a symbol of remembrance.¹

However, *Papaver rhoeas* has more ancient human associations with sacrifice and rebirth. In Egypt, archaeologists have found it mixed with barley seed dating to more than 4,500 years ago. The first neolithic farmers who brought agriculture to Europe also brought corn poppy seeds mixed with their grain. In British folk culture, the blood-red poppy, which sprang up wild in grain fields only to be cut down at harvest and yet grew again in spring, became a symbol of fertility, death and rebirth.

Ironically, World War II almost proved locally fatal to the flower that England adopted as a symbol of the veterans of World War I. The desperate demand for food in besieged Britain led to cultivation of waste places where corn poppies flourished, as well as the indiscriminate use of herbicides fatal to the plants. Fortunately, British conservation organizations stepped in during the 1980s to rescue wildflowers.

The late twentieth century vogue for the French Impressionist

painters helped create an American market for *Papaver rhoeas*, as the Impressionists, including Monet, Cassatt, Renoir, and Van Gogh, painted the poppy more than any other flower, and many gardeners wish to brighten their gardens with plants that Monet and Renoir chose for their own estates.²

Today, corn poppies are a common component of wildflower mixes sold in the United States, and are usually of the "Shirley" variety bred by the Reverend William Wilkes of Shirley in Surrey, England, in 1880. Shirley poppies represent a palette of colors from white to pink to red to mauve. Other popular scarlet poppy varieties with dramatic black hearts, "Flanders Field" and "American Legion," derive from the wild *coquelicot* of France and are closer to the bright flowers that sprang up on soldiers' graves.³

In some areas, peace workers wear the white Shirley poppies on Armistice Day to show their respect for veterans while expressing the active hope that the world will not suffer war again.

Anthropologist Nan Hannon and ethnobotanist Donn L. Todt garden in Ashland.

ENDNOTES

1. Richard Mabey, *Flora Britannica* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1996), pp. 50-54.
2. Derek Fell, *The Impressionist Garden* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1994), p. 96.
3. Christian Boucher, *Les Fleurs du Midi* (Aix-en-Provence, France: Edisud, 1995), p. 159.



"Mr. Ashland," Clarence Lane, shows community support for local veterans, circa 1950.

SOHS #18091

The Fabric of History

by Bill Alley

A small piece of fabric in the collections of the Southern Oregon Historical Society tells a tale of triumph and tragedy during the golden age of aviation. In the decades after the end of the First World War the country was obsessed with all aspects of flight. What captured the public's fancy the most, however, were the giant rigid airships known as dirigibles.

In 1919 Congress appropriated \$1.5 million for the construction of an airship for the navy, designated the ZR-1. When launched on August 20, 1923, the ZR-1 was an impressive sight. She measured 680 feet in length and was buoyed by 2,115,174 cubic feet of helium. The purpose of this new airship was to serve as a long-range patrol craft for the navy, extending the eyes of the fleet in the days before radar. After her successful trials the ZR-1 was officially commissioned as a vessel in the United States Navy and given the name *Shenandoah*.¹

From the moment she entered the fleet, however, controversy and politics dogged the giant airship. Reverting to peacetime "normalcy," the country saw little need of maintaining a large military. The recent Washington Disarmament Conference in 1921-22 (treaty signed in 1922) had slashed the size of the world's fleets, and appropriations for military spending were reduced. Under such circumstances, the navy saw the immense excitement generated by this new giant airship as a public relations bonanza.²

Instead of seeing duty with the fleet, the *Shenandoah* embarked on a series of "county fair flights." In 1924 she flew across the country, on a schedule that ensured overflights of most major cities and towns along her route. Influential civilians and members of Congress were given rides, all in an effort to ensure continued military appropriations.³

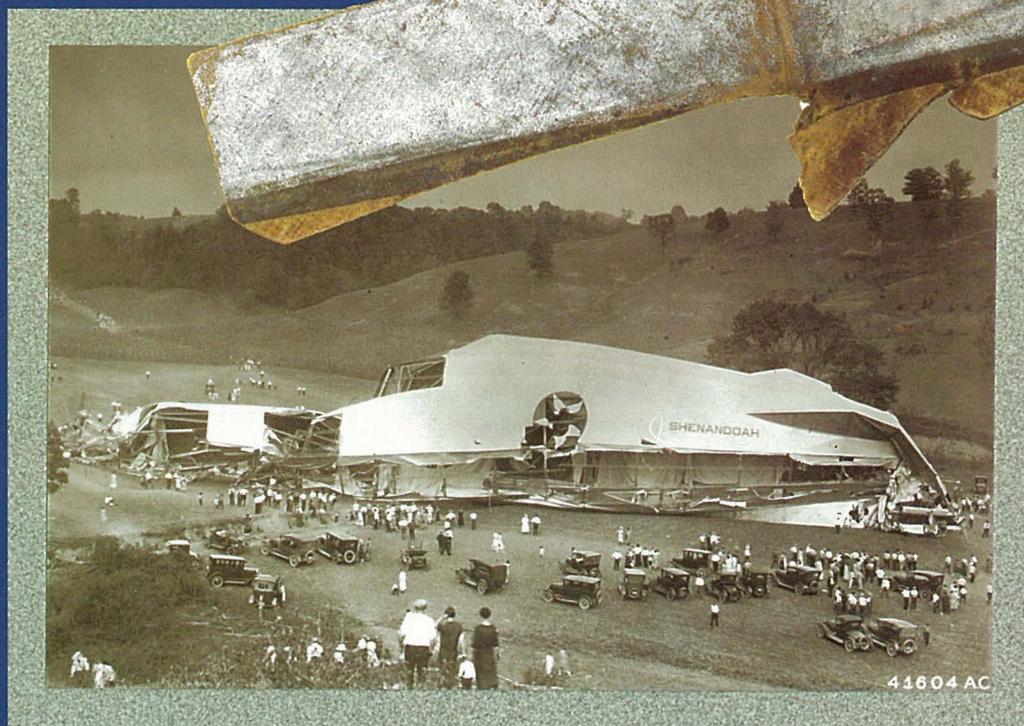
Unfortunately, dirigibles were ill-suited to overland flight; they were designed for service over the open oceans. In the summer of 1925 the *Shenandoah* was ordered on a Midwest tour, taking her from her home base in Lakehurst, New Jersey, to Detroit and back. The commanding officer of the *Shenandoah*, Lt. Cmdr. Zachary Landsdowne, argued vehemently against this trip. A Midwesterner himself, he well knew of the dangers posed by summer thunderstorms over the region.⁴

On September 3, 1925, near Ava, Ohio, the *Shenandoah* encountered a massive thunderstorm. The force of the storm was more than the dirigible could handle and she broke up, the two main sections coming to ground twelve miles apart. Fourteen men, including Landsdowne, were killed. Within hours of the tragedy, the sites of the crash had drawn countless gawkers, and many began to collect souvenirs from the wreckage. It is just one such piece of the *Shenandoah's* outer fabric, that is now preserved in the collections of the Southern Oregon Historical Society.⁵ 🏠

Bill Alley is historian/archivist with the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

ENDNOTES

1. Douglas Robinson and Charles L. Keller, *Up Ship, U.S. Navy Rigid Airships 1919-1935*, (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1982), p. 73.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 108.



MS #3624

The wreckage of the stern section of the Shenandoah lies crumbled on the ground near Ava, Ohio, on September 3, 1925, after a thunderstorm tore the dirigible in two. Souvenir hunters had already begun to strip pieces of the fabric skin from the airship's skeleton when the photo was taken. A piece of that fabric, above, is in the Society's collection.



Things To Do in November

PROGRAMS: *(see listings below for complete descriptions)*

	<u>DATE & TIME</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
November Craft of the Month	Museum hours	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Corncob Critters
Documenting Quilts & Caring for Your Family Heirlooms	Sat., Nov. 18, 9am - noon, 12:30 - 3:30 (as scheduled)	HISTORY CENTER	Two-part workshop

PROGRAM DETAILS

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.

NOVEMBER CRAFT OF THE MONTH

Corncob Critters

Create a corncob critter magnet to take home and decorate your refrigerator or holiday placettings. Families. 50¢.

DOCUMENTING QUILTS AND BABY SHOES, HATS, CLOTHING--CARING FOR YOUR FAMILY HEIRLOOMS

Join us for this two-part workshop at the History Center. From 9:00 a.m. to noon, preservation consultant Janette Merriman will discuss various factors that affect the preservation of fabric heirlooms and demonstrate the proper storage and display of these treasures. Up to 20 participants will create a padded hanger, stuff hats and shoes for proper storage, and learn how to properly fold doilies and hand clothing and quilts.

After a break for lunch (bring a sack lunch if you plan to participate in the afternoon), quilt appraiser Carol Hazeltine will meet with individuals wanting to know more about a family quilt. Space is available for seven participants to each schedule a 30-minute appointment to ask questions about their quilt and will receive written documentation from the process. No monetary values will be provided; this is solely for identification purposes.

Fee for this two-part workshop is \$10 for Society members; \$15 for non-members. Preregistration and prepayment required by November 15 due to the limited number of appointments available.

ANNUAL CONTRIBUTORS FUND 2000

Society members and friends will be receiving a letter requesting a contribution to the Ninth Annual Contributors Fund. Although the past year's reduction in funding from Jackson County government meant open hours and staffing cutbacks, the Society is facing its challenges head on. Programs, exhibits, special events, and workshops all will continue with help from YOU!

Membership dues cannot fully cover the costs incurred to preserve the region's past and educate today's youth about the value of their heritage. Small and large contributions will provide the Society with operating support to help care for over 12 structures (70,000 square feet of which are OWNED by the County and MAINTAINED by the Society), approximately 81,000 artifacts and over 750,000 historic images. With help from members and friends, the ever popular Children's Heritage Fair, looked forward to and enjoyed by over 2,500 Jackson County fourth graders, and many special events held during the Christmas holiday, will continue to bring the meaning of the past to the present.

Please take a moment to fill out and return the contribution card enclosed with your letter and consider how much your contribution will assist in making a difference in your community while ensuring the Society's continued success. The Society Board of Trustees, Society staff, and the Society Foundation Board of Directors all thank you for assisting in bringing the meaningfulness of the past into our present lives.

Discover the treasures of Christmas past.



Visit the
HISTORY STORE

California & 3rd, Jacksonvill

OPEN
WED - SAT 10AM TO 5PM
SUN 11AM - 5PM



(541) 773-6536

EXHIBITS: *(see listings below for complete descriptions)*

	LOCATION	MUSEUM HOURS
Century of Photography: 1856-1956 Talent Historical Society High Water: Local Flooding	HISTORY CENTER	Mon. - Fri., 9:00am - 5:00pm
Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker Jacksonville: Boom Town to Home Town Politics of Culture: Collecting the Native American Experience Hannah Hall of Justice The Shape of Fashion: 1900-1925	JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM	Wed. - Sat., 10:00am - 5:00pm Sunday, noon - 5:00pm
Ongoing 'hands on history' exhibits	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Wed. - Sat., 10:00am - 5:00pm Sunday, noon - 5:00pm
"Fiber Fashions"	3RD ST. ARTISAN STUDIO	Sat., 11:00am - 4:00pm

EXHIBIT DETAILS

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.

CENTURY OF PHOTOGRAPHY: 1856-1956

Highlights the work of two area photographers, Peter Britt and James Verne Shangle, with cameras from the Society's collection.

HIGH WATER: LOCAL FLOODING

Dramatic photographs of local Jackson County floods of the last 150 years will be on display through fall 2000.

MINER, BAKER, FURNITURE MAKER

Explores the development of the Rogue Valley and the impact the industrial revolution had on the settlement of Oregon.

THE SHAPE OF FASHION: 1900-1925

Women's fashion changed dramatically during the early years of the 20th century, reflecting the changing role of women in society. On display through December is a selection of daywear, evening gowns, and undergarments.

JACKSONVILLE: *Boom Town to Home Town*

Traces the development of Jacksonville.

POLITICS OF CULTURE: *Collecting the Native American Experience*

Cultural history of local tribes and discussion of contemporary collecting issues.

HALL OF JUSTICE

History of the former Jackson County Courthouse.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Explore home and occupational settings from the 1850s to the 1930s through "hands-on-history."

FIBER FASHIONS

Members of the Rogue Valley Handweavers, Far Out Fibers and the Saturday Handweaving Guild present an exhibit of wearable art. Members will also demonstrate traditional artforms of spinning and weaving. Exhibit runs through November 25.

HISTORIC OPEN HOUSE LISTINGS:

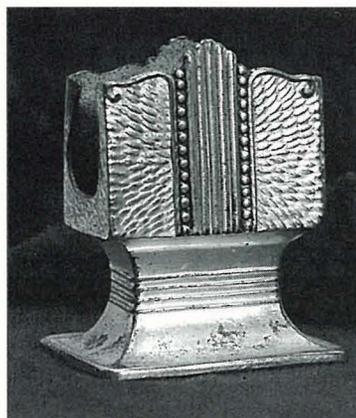
- State Historic Preservation Office
www.prd.state.or.us - click on "publication"
PHONE: 503-378-4168
- Southern Oregon Historical Society
PHONE: 541-773-6536

Mystery Object of the Month

August's Mystery Object was a yarn feeder. Yarn was stored inside and pulled out through the hole, keeping the yarn tidy and away from the cat! Congratulations to Jackie Bettis of Medford, for guessing correctly!

November Mystery Object:

This item was part of a set. Do you have any bright ideas what it held?



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY SITES

Phone: (541) 773-6536
unless listed otherwise

Fax (541) 776-7994
Email info@sohs.org
Website www.sohs.org

HISTORY CENTER
106 N. Central, Medford
Mon - Fri, 9:00am to 5:00pm

RESEARCH LIBRARY
106 N. Central, Medford
Tues - Fri, 1:00 to 5:00pm

**JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM &
CHILDREN'S MUSEUM**
5th and C, Jacksonville
Wed - Sat, 10:00am to 5:00pm
Sun, noon to 5:00pm

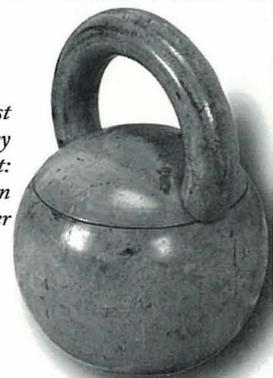
U.S. HOTEL
3rd and California, Jacksonville
Upstairs room available for rent.

JACKSONVILLE HISTORY STORE
Wed - Sat, 10:00am to 5:00pm
Sun, 11:00am to 5:00pm

THIRD STREET ARTISAN STUDIO
3rd and California, Jacksonville
Sat, 11:00am to 4:00pm

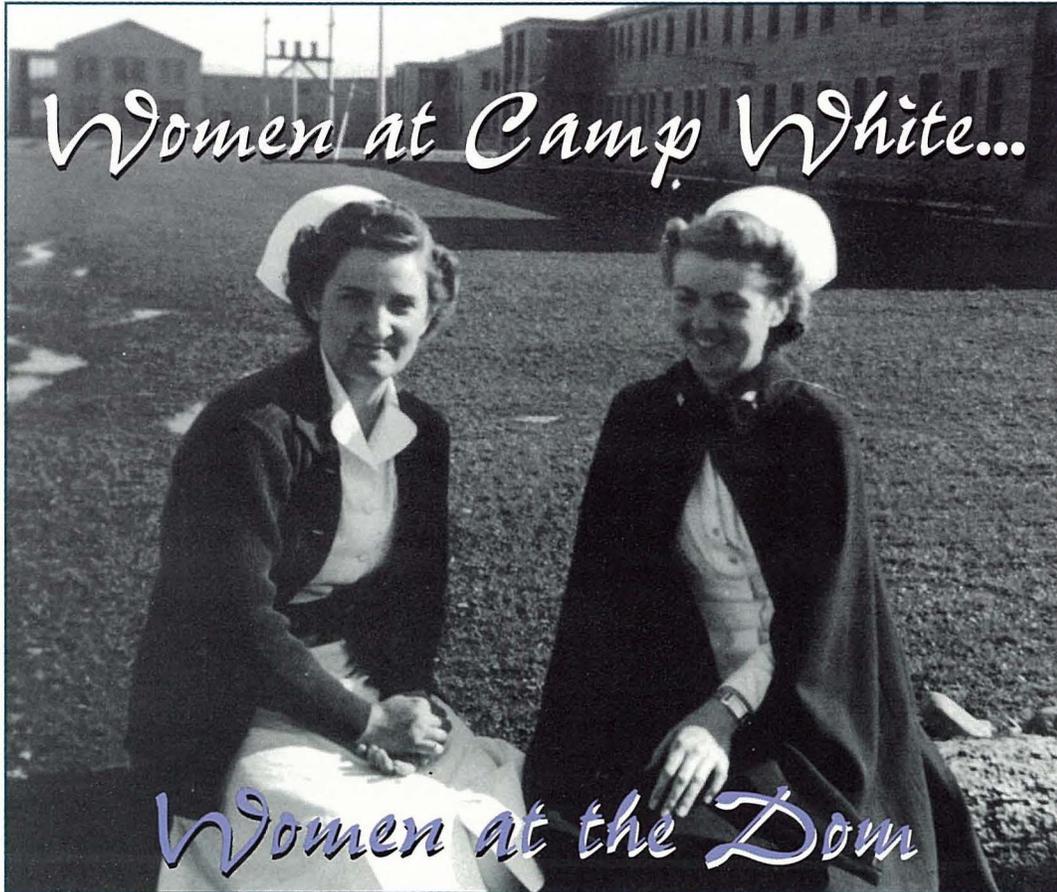
HANLEY FARM
1053 Hanley Road
(open by special appointment)
(541) 773-2675.

August
Mystery
Object:
yarn
feeder



Send your answer on a postcard with your name, address, and phone number to: News & Notes Mystery Object, SOHS, 106 N. Central Ave., Medford, OR 97501, or by email to info@sohs.org

Women at Camp White...



Women at the Dom

by Doug Foster

SOHS #13682

Women played a vital role at Camp White during World War II. While the huge wartime army “cantonment” camp near Medford is best remembered as the training ground where thousands of men were transformed from civilians into soldiers of the Ninety-first Infantry before going overseas, it was also an army nurses training center where many hundreds of women, all of them graduates of civilian nursing schools, were trained in military procedures before going overseas to care for wounded soldiers. Moreover, women—members of the Women's Army Corps and the Army Nurse Corps, civilian employees and community volunteers—helped run Camp White.¹

The former Camp White hospital buildings in White City now house the Department of Veterans Affairs Domiciliary, where women once again play a vital role. While the “Dom” is often thought of as a male institution—as a rehabilitation center for veterans where more than 700 male patients reside—about half of the Dom's 370 civilian employees are women, many of whom are also veterans of the armed services. Moreover, the number of women patients at the Dom is growing, reflecting the growing number of women serving in the American military.²

Above, U.S. Army 2d Lts. Helen Brennan, left, and Grace Ivory, right, sit in front of the Camp White station hospital in early 1943, wearing their army-issue nurses' “whites”—very much like the uniforms civilian nurses used to wear.

Below, the sprawling hospital took up only a small portion of Camp White's 43,000 acres during World War II. A maze of interconnected buildings with miles of hallways, the hospital was laid out in a series of “H” configurations to confine damage in the event of fire or enemy attack.

SOHS #5778



Camp White

Built in less than a year, Camp White included 1,300 buildings and covered 43,000 acres of land; at its peak, it had a population of nearly 40,000, making it more than three times the size of pre-war Medford and the second-largest city in Oregon. The camp was designed to train a full infantry division at one time.

Camp White's sprawling brick "station hospital," completed in August of 1942, was then "one of the largest, best equipped, and best staffed military hospitals on the West Coast." Fifty years ago, the Camp White station hospital had more than twice as many beds as are available today at Providence Hospital and Rogue Valley Medical Center combined.³

THE ARMY NURSE CORPS

Grace Evory was twenty-three years old when she arrived at Camp White in the fall of 1942. Like all army nurses at that time, she was a female, a nurse, a volunteer and an officer. A second lieutenant, Evory was one of the 100 army nurses assigned to the Seventy-ninth General Hospital, a tactical medical unit sent to Camp White for overseas training. She spoke with a Brooklyn accent, as did almost all the other nurses of the Seventy-ninth General Hospital--a reserve unit made up of doctors and nurses from nine Brooklyn hospitals who had been called up for active duty in 1942. Evory, who had lived in New York all her life, volunteered to serve as an army nurse shortly after Pearl Harbor.⁴

All army nurses stationed at Camp White lived in the nurses quarters near the station hospital: a series of wood-frame, two-story, roomed-off barracks. This area was patrolled by military police and was strictly "off limits" to male soldiers. During World War II, the army still had a very traditional view of women; the Camp White station hospital issued a two-page "Rules for Nurses," which required that:

"Nurses will wear the prescribed uniform at all times. The wearing of colored handkerchiefs and colored slips with the white uniform is prohibited.-- Colored jewelry, earrings, or flowers are not a part of a military uniform and will not be worn."⁵

The Seventy-ninth General Hospital wasn't the only tactical medical unit training at Camp White. In July of 1943, there were three other general hospitals, two station hospitals, one field hospital and five portable surgical hospitals.⁶ If each of these units had a full complement of

nurses, there would have been about 600 nurses at Camp White at that time. (A 1,000-bed general hospital such as the Seventy-ninth had a full complement of about 105 nurses, fifty-five commissioned officers and 500 enlisted men--medical technicians and orderlies as well as many other non-medical specialists ranging from cooks to carpenters, since a general hospital had to operate as a self-sustained community.)⁷

.....
The nurses learned military etiquette, endured morning exercises, marched in formation and trained in the field.



Army nurses stationed at Camp White train to use gas masks. The nurses are wearing a training uniform of blue slacks, white blouses, and blue sweaters.

Ed Zander, a military policeman who patrolled Camp White by motorcycle, estimates that there were more than 500 army nurses at Camp White at a time--with new medical units arriving for training as other units left for overseas duty.⁸ However, Roy Erickson, also an M.P. at the camp, remembers fewer nurses.⁹

Because so many medical units were training there, the Camp White staff improvised a basic training program for the officers of the Army Nurse Corps to orient civilian nurses to military life. The nurses learned military etiquette, endured morning exercises, marched in formation and trained in the field. Evory remembers marching to Eagle Point and back; shooting at the firing range; going through gas mask drills and braving the Camp

White tear-gas chamber; and surviving the Ninety-first Division's infiltration course: belly-crawling beneath barbed wire while bullets flew overhead.¹⁰

Camp White had offered field training to many hundreds of army nurses for a year before the army opened its first "official" basic training program for nurses in September of 1943 at Fort Meade, Maryland.

When nurses drilled at Camp White, their male "drill sergeant" was actually an army captain: since army nurses all held at least the "relative rank" of second lieutenant, they had to be drilled by someone senior in rank. Relative rank meant that army nurses then had an officer's title and wore the same insignia, but since they were appointed and not

commissioned, they did not have the full rights, privileges, and comparable pay of a male commissioned officer. About a month after Evory arrived at Camp White, though, Congress granted army nurses pay comparable to male commissioned officers. Before the end of the war, Congress would grant army nurses temporary commissions and, later, full commissions.¹¹

All of the nurses of the Seventy-ninth General Hospital were placed on temporary assignment at the Camp White station hospital, which served as both a training hospital and as the primary care facility for military personnel at the camp. When caring for soldiers who got sick or injured during basic training, Evory worked with doctors from her own medical unit. Army nurses also received training in the operation of a military hospital; and, in turn, some nurses trained enlisted personnel from their own medical units to be orderlies.¹² On March 1, 1943, classes started at the station hospital to train 460 enlisted

men at a time to function as medical technicians in all branches of army hospital work; in addition, sixty enlisted men a month were trained in field sanitation.¹³

Army nurses got one day off a week at Camp White. The nurses of the Seventy-ninth General Hospital formed a winning softball team, defeating the Camp White civilian women's team. (The medical technicians developed their own competitive events, including the 200-yard dash with litter; the ambulance loading race; shelter tent pitching; and the 200-yard fireman's carry.)¹⁴

On her time off, Evory liked to go to regimental dances on post. That's where she met 1st Lt. (later Captain) Ray Stewart in January of 1943; four months later they were married at the Camp White chapel.

Three months later, all personnel of the Seventy-ninth General Hospital left Camp White by train, en route to their next duty station in Northern Ireland. Grace didn't see her husband again until March of 1945 when he was a patient at Walter Reed Army Hospital. While fighting in Italy with the Ninety-first Division he received a bullet wound that left him a paraplegic. Grace cared for him for many years, until his death.¹⁵

THE WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS (WAC)

Months before the first WACs arrived on post, Camp White headquarters issued an announcement that warned against regarding women soldiers "lightly" or underestimating "their potential usefulness to the victory effort," and which cautioned

servicemen that WAC officers "will be shown the same courtesies and greeted as all other officers of the army."¹⁶

When World War II broke out, the only women in the U.S. Army were nurses. Founded in 1903, the Army Nurse Corps was a small, but well-established part of the army by 1941; and nursing was then an accepted career for women in America. While the American public expected women who were civilian nurses to serve their country as military nurses, Americans were less anxious for women to serve in the military in non-medical roles. Finally, a manpower shortage and growing political pressure by women's groups led Congress to pass legislation establishing the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in May of 1942; sixteen months later, it was integrated into

the army as the Women's Army Corps.

While army nurses entered military service as career professionals and were all officers, WACs had a wide variety of skills and educational backgrounds and were organized along combat lines with officers and enlisted women. Initially, the federal government supported the Women's Army Corps by saying that a WAC could "replace a man for combat." Still, many women faced family and public opposition when they became WACs, since it was then generally considered an unconventional role for women.¹⁷

In August of 1943, the month Grace Evory Stewart's medical unit shipped out, the first WACs arrived at Camp White: three officers and fifteen enlisted personnel. According to the August 12, 1943, *Medford Mail Tribune*, they were "sent to relieve service men for more strenuous duties." These WACs, both officer candidates and enlisted, had already completed basic training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa.

Charlie Milam, who was a military policeman at Camp White, remembers that WACs drove trucks for the Quartermaster Corps, everything from pickups to "six-by-six trucks"—big trucks with six wheels and a six-wheel drive.¹⁸ WACs worked as dispatchers, typists, clerks and drivers at Camp White; they kept records, helped mechanics in the motor pool, checked out tools, did inventory and repairs, worked in supply rooms, the seamstress shop and the post office. Zander estimates there were well over a hundred WACs at Camp White, yet none of them served in the military police then; in fact, the Camp White brig didn't have facilities for women.¹⁹

Second Lt. Vivian Smith, a native of Billings, Montana, who joined the WACs after finishing college, was the Camp White postmaster. She also worked with the mayor of Medford, J.C. Collins, to locate off-post rental housing for army wives. In June of 1945, the mayor's son, 2nd Lt. Hugh Collins, returned from the South Pacific for a month's leave in Medford, and the mayor introduced his son to Smith. Hugh and Vivian later married; Hugh worked as a lawyer and Vivian taught junior high school. They lived in Medford for the next fifty-three years, until Vivian's death in 1998.²⁰

The WACs and army nurses at Camp White were among 350,000 women who served in the armed forces during the war (about 60,000 as army nurses). Women enlisted in such large numbers and served in so many job assignments that their acceptance as a permanent part of the post-World War II military was assured.²¹

SOHS #13677



Above, 2nd Lt. Grace Evory of the seventy-ninth General Hospital, in white, and 1st Lt. Ray Stewart of the ninety-first Infantry Division are married at the Camp White Chapel, May 7, 1943.



At left, two weeks after her marriage at Camp White, Grace Stewart, left, and tentmate Suzie White, right, arrange their kit pup tent on an overnight bivouac at Ginger Rogers' ranch near Shady Cove.

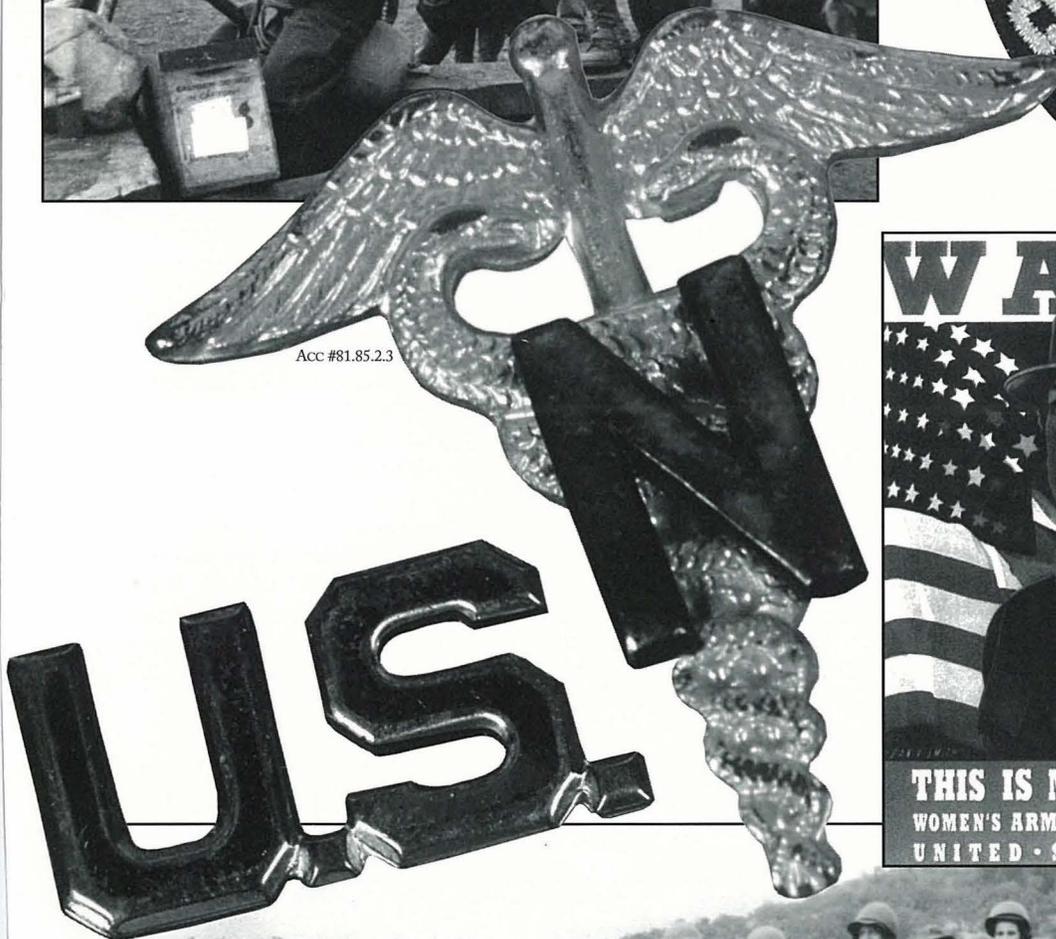
Army nurses take machine gun practice at the Camp White firing range in 1943.



Acc #80.21.2

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Acc #81.85.2.3



A world War II recruiting poster urges women to join the new Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, formed in May of 1942. Before the WAAC, the only women in the army were nurses.

Acc #82.85.1.4



Army nurses in fatigues, including leggings and steel helmets, pause during field training at Camp White.

SOHS #13625

SOHS #13631



Four hundred civilians, mostly women, operated the huge Camp White laundry, keeping the camp's uniforms, towels, and bedding clean and properly folded.

Coast, employed 400 civilians, mostly women. Many local women, as well as some German prisoners of war, worked at the Clothing and Equipment Shop, where canvas tents and uniforms were repaired. When Myrtle Newton heard that the Army wanted "mature women" to work on post, she applied and was hired to make sandwiches and salads at the Post Exchange.²³ More than 200 local women worked at the twenty-two separate branches of the Camp White Post Exchange, each of which ran two shifts and had a cafe that served sandwiches and soup.²⁴

Women volunteers also helped. "To build up the morale of convalescent soldiers," women from the local Red Cross sponsored entertainment programs for patients at the Camp White hospital. The January 24, 1943, *Mail Tribune* carried a story requesting service clubs to donate homemade cakes and cookies for the patients.

Historian George Kramer called Ginger Rogers the "brightest star related with Camp White." Rogers, the dancer and movie star, helped raise funds for the war effort in Medford; she also allowed Army nurses training at Camp White to set up their pup tents and bivouac overnight on her Shady Cove ranch.²⁵

Blanche Frisbie and another Jackson County public health nurse volunteered to be on call during the night to drive pregnant army wives from their homes in town to the Camp White station hospital if labor started. Frisbie made the drive many times; Camp White soldiers and their wives were parents of more than half the babies born in Jackson County during the camp's first year of operation.²⁶

SOHS #15921 DETAIL



Dancer and movie star Ginger Rogers, pictured here at a war bond drive in Medford, let army nurses at Camp White camp on her ranch property.

CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES AND WOMEN VOLUNTEERS

The nation's symbol of patriotic womanhood during World War II was "Rosie the Riveter," who was portrayed on posters as a strong, competent woman dressed in overalls with a bandanna around her head. These posters—inspired by Rose Will Monroe, a riveter who helped build B-29 and B-24 bombers at an aircraft factory in Ypsilanti, Michigan—were designed to encourage American women to join the work force and help the war effort. In the Rogue Valley, many women did join the civilian work force at Camp White.²²

The Camp White laundry, which was reportedly one of the largest on the West

Members of the domiciliary cafeteria's "morning crew" pose with veterans in 1955. After the war, Camp White was transformed into a facility designed to accommodate veterans needs.



Women employees at the Dom contribute to the homey atmosphere in the cafeteria in an effort to brighten patients' days with Christmas carols during the holiday season in 1955.



The Domiciliary

The Domiciliary at White City opened in 1949 and is now by far the largest domiciliary in the Veterans Affairs system, and the only domiciliary not attached to a V.A. hospital. It is housed in sixty-two buildings on 142 acres of the former Camp White. The heart of the Dom is the former Camp White station hospital, a sprawling mass of brick buildings interlaced with a bewildering maze of hallways--seven miles of hallways as a matter of fact!

It is a small, self-contained city with its own fire department, police force, thirty-bed infirmary, dental clinic, pharmacy, church, newspaper, golf course, bowling alley, theater, canteen store, barber shop, cafeteria, and library. Rogue Community College has a branch there, offering forty classroom courses. All low-income veterans with a satisfactory discharge who have a medical diagnosis or who are homeless are eligible for admission to the domiciliary. Currently, 755 patients live there, including twenty-five women; their average age is fifty.

All patients at the Dom must submit to nightly bed checks and testing for substance abuse. They are also expected, if able, to participate in "incentive therapy." More than 60 percent of Dom patients participate, working in every department from the security force to the front office; they are paid a modest wage for these jobs, which provide skills, training and an important service.

Besides providing care for resident patients, the Dom offers outpatient services to eligible veterans, including health and dental care, counseling, rehabilitation, and a women's wellness program. Last year more than 5,500 veterans living in nearby areas used the Dom's outpatient services, including a small but growing number of female veterans.²⁷

WOMEN AS INPATIENTS

The December 14, 1976, *Mail Tribune* reported that the Dom had gone coed when ten former servicewomen moved into "bright pink quarters" in a new wing set aside for women. One of the first women patients at the Dom, Phyllis Winians, a 43-year old former army clerk-typist, said on her first day there, "I get along with men OK, but if some guy tells me I'm 'just' a woman I'll tell him off. You have to hold your own ground."

Why is it that the Dom operated for twenty-seven years before the first women veterans used its services? Joan A. Furey, director of the V.A. Center for Women Veterans in Washington, D. C., said that

"historically, women vets were not high users of V.A. services because the V.A. wasn't prepared to treat women, and frequently women's experiences of V.A. treatment were so bad that word got around. It's only been in the last fifteen years that V.A. services for women have greatly improved."

Furey, a former army nurse, explained that historically women represented only a small percentage of the military--before the army switched to an all-volunteer force. In 1970, women comprised only 2 percent of the active duty force. By the time of the Gulf War, the figure was 11 percent; today it is 16 percent and growing. An upsurge in

PHOTO BY DANA L. HEDRICK



The Veterans Affairs Domiciliary, housed in the former Camp White hospital, sits just west of Highway 62 in White City.

the number of women veterans using V.A. services has accompanied this growth. Between 1993 and 1998, the number of female veterans treated by the V.A. grew by 64 percent, while the number of male veterans grew only 2 percent during the same period.²⁸

.....
"I get along with men OK, but if some guy tells me I'm 'just' a woman I'll tell him off. You have to hold your own ground."

The women veterans who have been patients at the Dom have ranged in age from their twenties to their nineties and have held a variety of military jobs. This was true even in 1980, when only twelve of the inpatients were women: one was an Army Air Corps cryptographer in World War II; another was a cook in the Women's Army Corps; another was an Air Force

dispatcher during the Korean War; and two were army nurses, one in World War I and the other in World War II. Charlotte Walker, who had gone through basic training at Camp White, served as an army nurse at DeWitt Army Hospital at Fort Belvoir, Maryland, during World War II. She later became the head nurse at the Jackson County Nursing Home and eventually moved to the Dom instead of going to live with relatives in Montana.²⁹

The Dom tries to meet the special needs of women veterans in an environment that is predominantly male. Several months ago the Dom started a "buddy system": each new woman patient is assigned another woman patient as a buddy. The Women Veterans' Advisory Committee at the domiciliary is now considering a request to set aside a separate cafeteria table just for women. The Dom has submitted a proposal for a sixty-bed rehabilitation program for female veterans, which, if approved, will be the first residential substance abuse program for women veterans in the V.A. system. Such changes and proposed changes often arise in response to requests from women patients.³⁰

Jacqueline Glynn, who served as a navy medic in Texas and in Adak, Alaska, has been a patient at the Dom for several months, her first time at a V.A. domiciliary. She said she is "thankful to be there," that her health team is very good, and that the "only drawback is all the unwanted attention from some of the men." Glynn, who is one of the younger women patients, said that with 700 male patients, being outnumbered can be a real problem.

When she has gone to dinner alone, she has often felt like she was "under siege." So, she asked the Dom patients' advocate about setting aside a cafeteria table just for women.³¹

Lynn Arguello, a former patient at the Dom who served for seven years as an army truck driver and mechanic in Louisiana and Okinawa, declined to go through one of the Dom's rehabilitation programs because it is an integrated program with men and she didn't feel comfortable talking openly in front of men. The V.A. then agreed to send her to a non-V.A. rehabilitation program for women in the Willamette Valley.³²

OUTPATIENTS

Karen Delugach, who has lived in Medford for twenty-three years, is one of more than 100 women veterans living in the Rogue Valley who use the Dom's health services as outpatients. She has ongoing health problems connected to her military service during the Vietnam War,

when she was an army nurse at an evacuation hospital in Pleiku. Before the Dom started a Women's Wellness Program staffed by a female nurse practitioner, Delugach had to drive to the V.A. hospital in Roseburg for help with women's health issues. She learned about the Dom through her church and says, "I don't know where I'd be today, where my family would be, without the Dom. It's really helped." Like many female veterans she says she greatly appreciates the option of having a female counselor, and describes her counselor at the Dom, Lynda Spangler, as a life saver.³³

FEMALE EMPLOYEES

The more than 180 women who work at the Dom hold a wide variety of jobs: as psychologists, secretaries, nurse practitioners, counselors, and doctors. Six of the Dom's sixteen doctors are women. Women also hold management positions including chief of food and nutrition, director of community resource development, and chief nurse.³⁴

Many women employees are veterans. Jean Keen, who has worked at the Dom for more than nine years as a program support assistant doing budget analysis and bookkeeping, served for three years in the Air Force as an aircraft mechanic on C-141A Starlifter cargo jets. She went to college on the GI bill to learn computers; her job at the Dom allows her to raise her daughters in Oregon, near where she grew up.³⁵

Many women employees still serve in the reserves. Karen Allen, who has worked for the V.A. for twenty-nine years, has been chief nurse at the Dom for eleven years on two tours; she is responsible for the Dom's infirmary and supervises a staff of forty, including twenty-five registered nurses. Since 1983, Allen has also served as a nurse in the Army Reserves, and now holds the rank of major. She stayed in the reserve, she said, because she loves patients and didn't want to lose her clinical nursing skills.³⁶

Other female employees at the Dom lack military backgrounds, yet are highly effective dealing with veterans, male and female. Spangler, who has worked full-time as a counselor at the Dom for ten years, is now the women veterans program coordinator and was one of the first women to lead a weekly "trauma group" for men who are Vietnam veterans. Her trauma group co-leader for the last eight years, Tom Harasin, a Grants Pass Vet's Center counselor who was a combat Marine in Vietnam, describes Spangler as "disarming" and "open-hearted."³⁷ While she started working at the Dom as a part-time intern in a graduate practicum program, Spangler now specializes in post-traumatic stress disorder counseling. Currently, she

spends most of her time in hour-long counseling sessions with outpatients.

For two years, Spangler helped co-lead the Dom's "ropes course." This course--which takes two hours a day for the first week and three hours a day for the second week--teaches self-confidence and teamwork in a challenging setting. Participants learn how to belay each other high in the air using ropes and overhead wires. They learn to walk along a two-wire bridge that is nearly twenty feet above the ground, while wearing safety harnesses.

The ropes course is now an integral part of the Dom's alcohol rehabilitation program, and is also available to other inpatients. When a woman patient goes through the course, the Dom tries to ensure that one of the two leaders is a woman.³⁸

One complication Spangler faced when leading the ropes course was that "men liked to be protective of me. Most of the men have traditional backgrounds. It was unusual for many of them to see a woman in the role of a teacher for something outdoors that's athletic and physically challenging."³⁹

WOMEN VOLUNTEERS

Women have been very active as volunteers since the Dom opened. In the early 1960s, twenty-one Gray Ladies from the Red Cross spent mornings visiting patients at the Dom infirmary, writing letters for them and doing errands. Other women volunteers, including members of the Blue Star Mothers, spent several days a month at the Dom, mending, stitching, putting up curtains and making bed covers.⁴⁰ More than ten years later, in the early 1970s, women of the V.A. Voluntary Service came four times a month to the Dom's sewing room to mend and iron cloths for handicapped or infirm veterans unable to do their own mending.

Women's active and effective roles at the Dom, both as volunteers and as employees, should have surprised no one. According to the V.A. Information Service in Washington, D.C., it was primarily women who, during and after the Civil War, organized community shelters for disabled veterans who had no place to stay--which led to President Lincoln's establishment of federal homes for soldiers--which, in turn, led to today's V.A. domiciliaries.⁴¹ 🏠

Doug Foster is a writer and historian living in Ashland.

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28. Interview with Joan A. Furey, Medford, 7 March 2000.
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31. Interview with Jacqueline Glynn, V.A. Domiciliary, White City, 3 April 2000.
32. Interview with Lynn Arguello, V.A. Domiciliary, White City, 28 February 2000.
33. Telephone interview with Karen Delugach, Medford, 6 April 2000.
34. Interview with Anna Diehl, V.A. Domiciliary, White City, 10 April 2000.
35. Keen interview.
36. Interview with Karen Allen, V.A. Domiciliary, White City, 20 April 2000.
37. Interview with Tom Harasin in Ashland, 30 April 2000.
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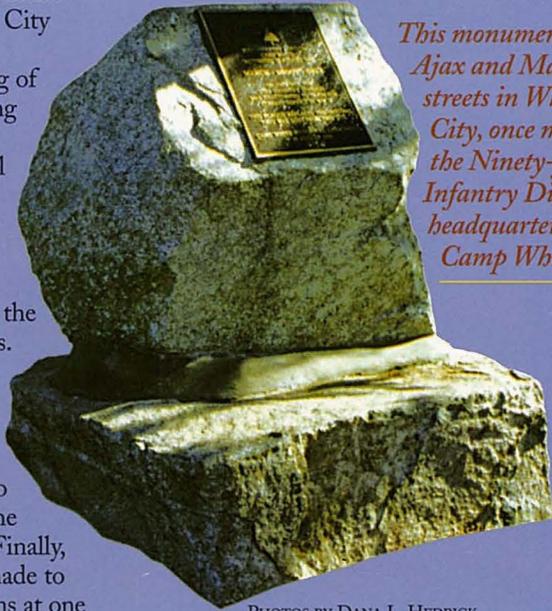
by Mel Cotton & Carolyn Sharrock

In 1992, the Veterans Affairs Domiciliary in White City celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the building of Camp White by dedicating the lower hallway of Building 200 as Memorial Hall. On display are photographs, posters, and maps depicting the construction of Camp White in 1942 and life at the camp during the war years.

The Camp White Historical Association got its start as the result of many people in the area meeting over coffee to discuss ways to preserve the history of Camp White. Finally, an organized effort was made to gather all interested persons at one meeting. More than 100 people attended, many of whom had helped to build the camp or had trained there during World War II.

On July 9, 1994, the group formally organized itself as the Camp White Historical Association and elected officers. Annual membership dues were set at \$12. With a collection at the meeting of \$38.85, the association opened a bank account. In August 1994, the association gained status from the state as a non-profit corporation.

The association's first goal was to refurbish a monument that had been erected in front of the Ninety-first Infantry Division headquarters in 1942 when the camp opened. Some years after the war, the monument



This monument, at Ajax and Maple streets in White City, once marked the Ninety-first Infantry Division headquarters at Camp White

PHOTOS BY DANA L. HEDRICK



Camp White Historical Association, located in building 200 at the Veterans Affairs Domiciliary.

was vandalized and the bronze plaque stolen. The refurbishing was completed in 1994, and the monument can be seen at Ajax and Maple streets, its original location in what is now White City.

In November 1997, the association accomplished its biggest project. The Camp White Military Museum opened on Veterans Day in the upstairs hallway of Building 200 at the Veterans Affairs Domiciliary. The museum displays many images, uniforms, flags, field kits, a Browning machine gun, medals, and other memorabilia. The Domiciliary donates the space for the museum and four other rooms where the association stores its collections.

The museum is open from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Call 826-2111, ext. 3674, for further information. ☞

Mel Cotton and Carolyn Sharrock are members of the Camp White Historical Association.

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