

April 30, 1994  
Powell, WY  
Susan McKay interviewing Velma Kessel

Susan: Now tell me about the different pictures we have here.

Velma: Well, this was the front gate and the soldiers.

Susan: That's the front gate.

Velma: Front gate, where we had to check-in and everybody had to check-out. This was Dr. Irwin, he was the chief medical officer, and hospital administrator.

Susan: Yes, I read about him in the paper. He was there most of the whole time?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: It sounded like he was very much liked, at least by the paper?

Velma: Oh he was, he was very well liked. This is Dr. <sup>Edo?</sup> Etoe, the childrens doctor, Dr. McKia, and Dr. ---.

Susan: The surgeon, the Japanese doctor.

Velma: Yes, this is the nurses aides on ward nine.

Susan: Okay, the nurses aides from what I can tell in the paper, they were usually here from within the camp?

Velma: Yes, they all of them were.

Susan: And they went to training, and then they helped the nurses and doctors?

Velma: Yes. This is Dr. Kimura, he was an OB doctor and also a surgeon.

Susan: Okay, and I read about him too. There was a little article that said that he delivered only girl babies but apparently had had a boy by accident. It was kind of a funny article.

Velma: This was a little baby Virgil that the mother was sent to Evanston and we kept the baby for about five months in the hospital.

Susan: And what was the problem with the baby?

Velma: There wasn't anything the matter with the baby but the mother was taken to Evanston.

Susan: Oh, the mother went to Evanston so you kept the baby until the mother came back?

Velma: Well, the baby was put up for adoption.

Susan: Oh, you know I read about a baby that was available for foster parents and then it said a couple applied for this baby. Was this the same baby?

*Adoption*

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Because it didn't say anything about what had happened or where the mother was.

Velma: Well, the mother was not married.

Susan: She was not married, that is what I thought.

Velma: You know it was such a disgrace back then.

Susan: And so why did she go to Evanston?

Velma: They found her down at the gate one night without any clothes on in the dead of winter and she had just mentally..

Susan: She was mentally disabled apparently? Was she in Evanston for five months then, is that?

Velma: No, I don't now how long she was in Evanston. We kept the baby for five months.

Susan: Okay, I see, by then the baby was adopted. I thought it was something like that because back in those days you didn't have babies out of wedlock.

Velma: You sure didn't.

Susan: At least you didn't talk about it.

Velma: This was a little child with a broken arm. And here are two soldier boys. This was on Ward 5 where we kept several rooms for them.

Susan: That's a really good picture. Very sharp image. I think Mike Macky must have copies of some of these.

Velma: He probably has.

Susan: Did he talk to you?

Velma: No, he has never talked to me.

Susan: Oh, hasn't he, okay because he has some similar ones. Okay. Is that you?

Oct '42 → May '45

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Oh, look at that. At what point was that? Was that at the camp?

Velma: Yes at the camp.

Susan: And did you actually live there?

Velma: Oh yes.

Susan: You didn't live in Powell?

Velma: No. My folks lived over here at Deaver. But I stayed at the camp.

Susan: You were there over three years? Is that right? The whole time it was open.

Velma: Well, I started to work in October, 1942 and the camp had been started in August. I left in May, 1945.

Susan: Okay, right before the camp closed.

Velma: Yes, and the camp closed in November. <sup>45</sup>

Susan: You saw about as much as anyone probably.

Velma: Well, I was there. And then here's the caucasian nurses. She was a surgical nurse, she was head nurse and there I am. This was a dietician. And this lady was from Cody.

Susan: There are four, eight, ten of you.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And I read in the paper about a couple that came in from Denver, from Denver Children's Hospital. <sup>[nurses]</sup>

Velma: Yes, they are not in here. They came later.

Susan: There was some turn over I'm sure. Cause I noticed like there would be articles about the Chief nurse turning over. Okay so these are some more of the aides.

Velma: Yes, and they dressed in blue pinafores with white blouses.

Susan: They are cute.

Velma: We had a capping ceremony so they wore caps.

Susan: After they completed their training?

Velma: Yes. This was when I was hired.

Susan: So you have a whole..

Velma: Well, I guess this was insurance, if anything happened to me I was to be the official. ?

*see papers*

Susan: Well, I'll be darn.

Velma: Here is some of the nurses, and these two girls were kitchen aides.

Susan: A few of them, it sounded like it was really important to keep the hospital running. I noticed in some of the articles of some other camps, in particular just in little news blurbs, that they were very short of aides often and that it was a big problem.

Velma: It was right toward the end because they were relocating so we had to close several of the wards.

Susan: There is a picture of you.

Velma: It's ... picture.

Susan: Oh, what an interesting picture.

Velma: This picture was taken down at the railroad as the evacuees came off the train to come into camp, everyone was checked. Eyes, nose, and throat. And then if they were sick they were sent to... at one time there was over 1,000 people.

*Velma's photo at station*

Susan: My goodness.

Velma: The same day...

Susan: Oh, with the baby.

Velma: Yes. This is a picture of the long hall.

Susan: Oh, in the hospital.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: 17 <sup>barracks</sup> barracks connected to the hall. Oh, I see cause the paper calls it a 17 ward hospital, it's 17 wings but what they mean is a long hall with...

Velma: The barracks, the barracks we called wards or wings.

Susan: And then it says each room in the barracks has furniture, an army cot mattress and a blanket. And a single electric light bulb. So there would be a patient in each room? Or more?

Velma: Well, we had a few private rooms, most of them was a big ward.

Susan: I see. Identification cards?

Velma: Yes. And here is a price list of things from 1945.

Susan: Where are the products from. Were they from in the camp?

Velma: They had a couple of stores that was run by the Japanese and they could sell things.

Susan: Okay. Is there where people generally bought their things or did they buy them by catalogue?

Velma: A lot of it was by catalogue.

Susan: Where did they get their money, did they have money left from when they left their homes?

Velma: Well, see they either had to sell their homes, board them up or do something with them and there is where they got their money was from there.

Susan: They didn't have any income at all in the camps, so you wonder how they survived.

Velma: The doctors made \$19 a month.

Susan: \$19. What did you make?

Velma: Well, \$1,600 a year. Isn't that awful?

Susan: Well, in those days it was a lot of money.

Velma: Yes it was. Now they make more than that in one month.

Susan: Can't buy as much either.

Velma: No, that's true. I got a real nice letter from a fellow that had read my book and he noticed that Dr. Suski was the doctor so he sent me his birth certificate.

Susan: Oh, okay. So he...

Velma: I couldn't say whether I helped with that delivery or not but.

Susan: Heart Mountain Hospital, let's see where is the date of birth is? It's 1943, August 27th. Sakunatomi. That's the father and the mother is Martha Fusuaka. And they are both from Los Angeles and now they are on block 2224 The Heart Mountain. That's really interesting. I would love to have a copy of that.

Velma: If you want to copy some of these things we will just take them over and have them done when we come back from Heart Mountain.

19  
13  
38  
19  
228 / yr for docs

Journal says \$1800

Susan: Okay, that would be great. On some of these photos I would have a photographer reproduce them.

Let me see what he says, "and read your book." I wonder how he got ahold of your book? "My birth certificate, and I've got a copy of Heart Mountain's Centennial with my birth announcement."

I'll be darn. That's very interesting. How do you think he got ahold of your book?

Velma: This Mary Blackburn, when they went out to Seattle they took some of my books and sold them.

Susan: Okay, was that the last union? The Heart Mountain Reunion?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Very interesting.

Velma: It's too bad she went to Red Lodge because they are very interesting to talk to.

Susan: Well, I'll talk to her another time. That's a nice picture. It looks about like this one. It's a little bit further back isn't it?

Velma: Yes, this one has a car in it.

Susan: Oh yes, that's a nice picture. Now I wonder what paper this came from?

Velma: I think probably the Powell paper.

Susan: Oh, the Powell paper.

Velma: You could get some information from the Powell paper over here at the library too.

Susan: That would probably be a good thing. I think the Powell paper and the Cody paper both have a quite a bit in it about Heart Mountain. That's the one that's in your book. That's a nice picture. Some of these pictures, did you put in your book. That must be where I've seen them.

Velma: Yes. This one was in there. This was Miss Wolford's class, her nurses aides.

Susan: What were their duties predominately?

Velma: Well, they did everything. They took blood pressures and gave bed baths and temperatures and everything except passing the medication.

Susan: Oh really, so they really... And then so the nurses must

have been more supervising everything.

Velma: That's right.

Susan: Dr. Carr. Okay. That's you.

Velma: That's when I married my John.

Susan: This is you ~~re~~intended?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Actually that's your wedding isn't it?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Were you married at Heart Mountain?

Velma: While I was working at Heart Mountain. We were married in Billings. He came home from the army for a furlough and we were married.

Susan: Was he somebody you had gone to school with? From Powell?

Velma: I had met him while I had worked in Billings.

Susan: I see.

Velma: This is a very well known picture, I think everybody has that picture.

Susan: Jay The Lion? (not sure what was said) ?

Velma: This was a booklet given to us so we would understand why the Japanese were there. ✓ have

Susan: The displaced Japanese Americans. That must be a very interesting book too, I would like to read that.

Velma: You can take it with you.

Susan: Well, I just want to be very careful with your things. So you know I'll get them back to you. Accounts on public affairs. Construction of the water system was one of the first projects in 1942, piped from near the river.

Velma: This is when I got a letter, V-Mail.

Susan: V-Mail. Merry Christmas and this is from your husband.

Velma: He ~~was~~ over in Africa.

Susan: Oh, my. This is the way V-Mail came. You mean this is exactly the way you got it?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And how did that? I don't know anything about V-Mail.

Velma: Well, I've forgotten a lot about it.

Susan: I mean how did it get transmitted, it's a very small.

Velma: It was done before, you know, before past the <sup>COMSOXS</sup>sensors. And it came just like that in an envelope.

Susan: In an envelope.

Velma: And that's all that he could put on it.

Susan: Merry Christmas, love John.

Velma: It's just a Christmas card.

Susan: From the Middle East, there's Bethlehem I guess. How interesting. So you kept working there and he went back to Africa. That must have been hard.

Velma: Yes. We were together 3 days before and then he was gone 33 months.

Susan: So then he came back in what '45?

Velma: Yes. '45, May, of '45.

Susan: Oh, that's when you quit at Heart Mountain.

Velma: Yes. And then we went, he wasn't out of the army yet so we went to West Palm Beach, Florida where he was stationed. We were there until December.

Susan: It must be a change to go from Heart Mountain to West Palm Beach, Florida. What a change.

Velma: Now you pick out what you want so...

Susan: Okay, I will do that.

Velma: On 21st, 1986 quite a few Japanese came back to Heart Mountain and they had a little ceremony out at the camp and then they had a real nice banquet and John and I were both invited to it because we had both worked at Heart Mountain. John worked there during construction.

Susan: Oh, I see. Before he was in the service.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Okay, what is the building here with Heart Mountain in the



background.

- Velma: That's the hospital and the chimney.'

Susan: Oh, the hospital.

Velma: That is the laundry room and the furnace for the steam heat. See the hospital was the only building in camp that had steam heat.

Susan: The only one with steam heat. And that is what this tall stack is?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And is the hospital still there? Any of it?

Velma: No.

Susan: No, but you saying the Blackburns actually lived in the hospital?

Velma: Yes they lived there when they first came to Heart Mountain to homestead.

Susan: I think that is interesting, to homestead on it in the Heart Mountain camp. Did they actually, did some of the property become theirs then? *homestead*

Velma: Oh, yes. They opened that up to I think 160 acres. And they were allowed one barracks for a \$1, they bought the barracks for a \$1 and they moved them onto their homesteads.

Susan: And so that land is theirs now?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And is part of the reason that they are so interested in it no doubt.

Velma: Well, I think now they have sold their farm.

Susan: They had a farm there?

Velma: Yes they had a homestead.

Susan: And then, here are some more pictures, what is this one? Is this leaving California?

Velma: No, they had just arrived at Heart Mountain.

Susan: Oh, that's arriving in Heart Mountain?

Velma: Yes. This was Mr. Robertson and he was taking them out to

their apartments.

Susan: The women? It looks like a family.

Velma: This was under construction.

Susan: That's interesting. Are these from newspaper?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And they had a ~~Century~~<sup>Sentry</sup> watching?

Velma: Oh yes, they had nine guard towers.

Susan: Nine guard towers?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Interesting. That's fascinating. Emergency entrance for obstetrics.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And is one of these Dr. ~~Kamara~~<sup>Kimura</sup>.

Velma: No this is Dr. Hanoca. And this is Dr. Eto. They just happen to be sitting out on the side.

Susan: Oh, okay they are not necessarily the obstetrics.

Velma: He did deliver babies too.

Susan: Okay.

Velma: Dr. Eto didn't.

Susan: So there was, it is interesting that they called it, is it an emergency and obstetrics or emergency entrance to obstetrics?

Velma: That's what it was.

Susan: For obstetrics, so anybody having a baby could come in these doors.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: That's interesting, I'd love to have a copy of that too.

Velma: I don't know, I think I have a couple one of those.

Susan: Oh, and this is a copy of,

Velma: It was given to the nurses aides on how to conduct yourself and things to do.

Susan: Oh, this is wonderful.

- Don't let patients read their thermometer. Don't tell patients what their temperature is. And don't argue with a patient. *Notes/rules*

Oh this is wonderful. Yes I would love to have a copy of this. Were you also suppose to follow these rules.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Okay.

Velma: Yes, there's one there, stand up when the doctor comes to the charting desk. You know they don't do that anymore. They don't wear their caps.

Susan: No, I know, things have changed a lot. Yes this would be fun to read a little more slowly, all the abbreviations and signs. Okay, good I would love to copy those. This article is interesting about the camp hospital among the state's best, cause I did read that in the Heart Mountain Centennial. And do you think that was true?

Velma: Yes, that was true at that time.

Susan: Why was it such a good hospital?

Velma: Well, it had everything. It was army, everything was the with army,

Susan: Everything that the army had?

Velma: It wasn't when we first went up there. We had army cots and .... pegs to sit on and things like that, but by 1943 we had nice furniture and cribs and all the equipment.

Susan: I read a little bit later, I think it was in 1943, about a caesarean section needing to be transferred to the Cody or Powell hospital. I have it in my notes, and that that hadn't been worked out very well. And they had to forge an agreement. Why was that?

Velma: I don't remember that.

Susan: I'll read it to you in my notes but I guess I was a little curious since this hospital had all the surgical facilities why they would need to transfer somebody out.

Velma: I don't know.

Susan: Okay, I'll pull that out.

Velma: We took quite a few patients to Billings for, well like heart patients and some things like that.

*Velma*  
Susan: It says mustard plaster. This recipe is given to me by a family doctor in 1947 when doctors still made house calls. Our baby one year had a bad chest cold - mix six tablespoons of flour, one tablespoon of ground mustard, and one egg together, spread on a clothe and apply to the chest. This mixture has never burned on anyone in my family but it might be a good idea to check on tiny tots. The doctor said to apply the plaster to the baby's back.

That says Iowa. I wonder what?

Velma: That's what we did. We used mustard plasters. But that wasn't unusual. My mom used them on me.

Susan: Yes, my mom did. My mom used turpentine plaster too. But I wonder if this, I wonder why this says Iowa? Do you have any idea?

Velma: I just cut that out. That's out of a magazine.

Susan: Oh, I see somebody from Iowa.

Velma: We went by but we never went up there. *Something missing*

Susan: You never went, why was that?

Velma: We weren't interested.

Susan: You weren't interested after you left?

Velma: After we left and the barracks were moved and we were busy raising our family and doing and we had our own business.

Susan: So everybody just forgot Heart Mountain and then at some point people got interested again.

Velma: Well, for awhile the Japanese didn't talk about it either.

Susan: They didn't at all.

Velma: No, they were disgraced to think they were sent to concentration camp.

Susan: And do they think of it as a concentration camp. *nomenclature*

Velma: They sure do.

Susan: Because it is very carefully, always called Relocation Camp.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: I guess I would feel that way too. So they kind of, what do you think, they hid their history.

Velma: I think they did. I have an article that was written by ...

Susan: Oh, how interesting. Jeff.. oh, <sup>BACON S,</sup> Bacom, yes I recognize his name because Mike Mackey talks to him.

Velma: You know the first time I met him he was out here and he was very nice, very pleasant. And the second time he was here he was so bitter.

Susan: Oh, really.

Velma: Oh, he was terrible. See as the years went by...

Susan: Oh... get curious and ask about our experiences. I wonder what the date of this paper is? It looks like it is fairly new though.

Velma: Oh yes, it was probably 19.., real here in 19...

Susan: In 1982 after hearing testimony, wait a second.. well, could I copy this also?

Velma: Sure.

Susan: Okay then I won't have to stand here and read it and I would like to have this. Either mail this specially or I will carry it back, which might be safer.

Velma: They didn't have a nurse then.

Susan: The did not have one?

Velma: They might not have. I don't remember when the surgical nurse came.

Susan: Okay, because it was early?

Velma: Now do you want to hear my whole speech or do you just want to...

Susan: Go ahead, I would like to hear your speech.

Velma: I'll just read it so we'll get through with it.

Susan: Okay, give me little background on the what the speech is about before you begin.

Velma: Well, I think my speech will tell.

Susan: Alright, then go ahead.

Velma: I've been asked to give a short talk on Relocation Camp at Heart Mountain where I worked 33 months as a registered nurse. It is now ancient history. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941 the west coast was swept with fear and hysteria. Fear of sabotage. President Roosevelt gave the executive order to people of Japanese descent on the coast of California, Oregon and Washington to assemble. They had 72 hours to sell their businesses, homes, put things in storage and to get rid of pets. One suitcase per family member. Those from California were sent to the assembly at the race track and housed in the stalls. Ten Relocation Camps had to be built. They had to meet certain qualifications...from the west coast large enough to house at least 5,000 people...no electricity available...most to a railroad or highway...and work year around for the evacuees. Workers were called in to survey streets, blocks, water lines and where the electric poles would go... built was 450 barracks a 120 feet by 20 feet divided into six one room apartments. Each apartment had two windows, one door, one coal stove, one ceiling light, army cots for each family member and a mop and nail kegs to sit on...per block 15 barracks on each side of the street, two mess halls, two latrines, and there would be administration buildings as needed, mess hall for enlisted personnel a post office, police station, fire hall and motor pool...the railroad. The military camp needed officers quarters, barracks for 124 enlisted men, mess hall, latrines. This was to be built in 60 days. It was said that a barrack could be built and divided into six one room apartments in sixty minutes. 150 bed hospital was built in the northeast corner of the camp...with me through the hospital...notice the long hall down the center, this was necessary in case of fire. Each barrack could be sealed off and it had to meet the fire code. The first barrack was the office for the caucasian personnel...Dr. Ewing the medical officer and administrator, the head nurse, welfare and social worker. This was used for the front office of the hospital. This barracks was doctors quarters. There were private rooms, a small.. stayed here. This barracks was the nurses quarters with private rooms... was the OB department. One delivery room, two labor rooms, two private rooms, one large room with four beds and a nursery. Mothers stayed from eight to ten days. The supervisor was a middle age Japanese...this was a pediatric ward...kitchen a linen closet, utility room, and private rooms, but no cribs. Parents had to stay with the patients to keep them on the army cots. A lot of flu, pneumonia, croup, we made mustard plasters.. and water...diarrhea...rooms at the end of ward five was kept for sick soliders...took care of the soliders. Six was a surgical ward...surgical and the other end...no bedside tables so the bedpans were...seven was a men's medical, one end was men's medical and the other was women's medical. When ward eight was finally finished...lung cancer patients, arthritis...ulcer...really liked it because when they came into the hospital it was nine hours by the ambulance. This barracks was the emergency room, five was used as a hospital and the other wards was open... and had lots of help...had winter coats so when it turned cold they were...or they sat on the floor. There were few books. No school bell, they used caucasian teachers because the Japanese...

Susan: They weren't allowed to teach, and yet the nurses, the Japanese nurses were allowed to be nurses.

Velma: They were except they were not allowed, I mean there was a supervisor over them.

Susan: I see.

Velma: 108 students graduated from...152 babies were born...762 acres cleared...November the 15th...no electricity or...Mr. and Mrs. Chester Blackburn had been involved in getting a monument at Heart Mountain. The chimney and several barracks are on the...

Susan: The buildings would just be moved, is that what happened?

Velma: They moved them out onto the homesteads.

Susan: They were just taken over by people that came, but there was so many buildings a lot.

Velma: Yes, they were sold.

Susan: Very interesting, thank you. This must be in your book.

Velma: Yes, it's in the book.

Susan: And I have a copy of, Mike gave me a copy of that.

Velma: Oh.

Susan: So I will give the diagram back to you. I am going to reread your book. It's been a little bit since I read it. Well, thank you, that's very interesting. I am trying to think about what to talk about. Let's just talk about being a nurse, what that's like, in the hospital, and some of your experiences. Were you a registered nurse at the time? And you had graduated from Billings Deaconess Hospital?

Velma: Yes, I graduated in 1940 and then I went to work at the county hospital in Billings.

Susan: I see.

Velma: A lot more of lower class people than what you would get in a paying hospital.

Susan: Sure.

Velma: They were nice people and all that ...

Susan: Tell me how you came to go to Heart Mountain from there.

Velma: Well, they were going to close the county hospital because several of the nurses left to go to the army. My folks lived at

Deaver, that a little town over...

Susan: I haven't been to Deaver yet.

Velma: And I wanted to join the army, but John and my dad just had a... and so.

Susan: What attracted you to being in the army? Just backing up a little bit.

Velma: Well, at that time that was the thing to do you know. A lot of my friends were going into the army.

Susan: Going overseas then, is that right?

Velma: Well, you had gone through basic training and all that.

Susan: And you said that both John and your father didn't like that idea?

Velma: They put a kibosh on it.

Susan: What were they worried about? I guess they were worried about you.

Velma: Well, John said when I come home I want you here. That was his.

Susan: And you couldn't say the same to him.

Velma: No he was drafted.

Susan: He was drafted?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: So when you applied for this job did you have any idea what Heart Mountain was about?

Velma: Well, I knew it was going to be the camp for the Japanese. But that was all.

Susan: What was the response about having a camp for Japanese people? Did that seem like a reasonable thing to do?

Velma: Powell accepted it fairly well, but Cody, they were up in the arms about it. They had signs in their windows saying no Japs allowed. I took two little Japanese nurse aides to Billings with me...between the rooms.

Susan: Wouldn't escape?

Velma: And they couldn't even speak Japanese.

*xenophobia*



Susan: They were Japanese/Americans of course.

Velma: Yes they were.

Susan: And what accounts in the difference between Powell and Cody about their attitudes?

Velma: I don't know. There was two families here, Japanese that were farmers. And they had lived here long before Heart Mountain. They owned their own farms. They were well thought of in the community.

Susan: Japanese people. Powell seems much more of a small town and people knew each other very well here. I don't know if Cody is a little bit different.

Velma: Cody is more or less a tourist town.

Susan: Has that always been true.

Velma: Yes. They make a lot of their money on tourist.

Susan: And that's not true in Powell particularly.

Velma: Not as much, no.

Susan: Cause attitudinal differences in the Japanese, and they must have felt that when they went out visiting.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Well tell me about what a nurses aide would be like at the hospital. Did you work different shifts and each shift, no doubt, was different.

Velma: I worked the 3-11 shift a lot. Because I could work 3-11 and then be off until the next morning till 3 and then go back and work 11-7 and then I could go home.

Susan: That's a pretty tough schedule.

Velma: Well it was, I couldn't do it now.

Susan: You basically would take eight hours off and then go back to work again.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And were you, like give me a sense of maybe each shift what the schedule would be like, maybe start with the day shift and.

Velma: Well the day shift they gave bathes and it was bed bathes, not like now, and then the doctors would...usually they served... of some kind in the morning, at 12 they served the trays.

Susan: There won't be a breakfast meal?

Velma: Yes, they, I forgot the breakfast that was usually...visiting hours from 4...after the trays were... ?

Susan: Traditional schedule of any hospital in that day and time. Let's talk, because I am so interested in this, the obstetrics ward and I would like to learn as much as possible about that, and did you spend quite a bit of time there, did you work in all different areas.

Velma: I worked, on the 3-11 shift, I was the only RN on the duty so I went and I wrote down a few things that... There were was no vaginal exams for the pregnant women, we did rectals.

Susan: Way back when I was in nursing school, that's all we did, that was back in the sixties. So it was kind of similar.

Velma: Yes. And morphine and scopolamine was given just before delivery and ether was given just before the delivery.

*morph/ scop + ether*

Susan: Okay, when you say just before delivery? During hard labor?

Velma: And then ether was given for the delivery.

Susan: So the mother's were asleep.

Velma: And it was given with, I'll draw a picture. It was kinda like a tea strainer as a mask, and then ether was poured onto that mask and we just kept the patient just under a little bit.

Susan: And did, was forceps used then? for the delivery?

Velma: Yes. A little bit. They didn't use the forceps like they do now days.

Susan: So when you say a little bit do you mean some,

Velma: On a few cases.

Susan: Usually the mothers could still push the baby out.

Velma: Yes. And isoleucine was given for the episiotomy.

Susan: They all had episiotomies?

Velma: As a rule. And Codeine was given for postpartum pain,...

Susan: What kind of oil, do you know?

Velma: Just baby oil. I can't remember about circumcisions. I don't think I ever helped with a circumcision...diapers, there was bird'seye...and formula was made in a formula kitchen...and it was

a powder.

Susan: And karo syrup maybe.

Velma: And karo syrup and if the baby had constipation you added a little bit more karo syrup.

Susan: Did the mothers not breast feed?

Velma: A lot of them did yes.

Susan: A lot did, okay. Was breast feeding encouraged?

Velma: Yes it was. But they still had this formula kitchen. And you now they...

Susan: It's full of vitamin A and D is that why?

Velma: Yes. And for diaper rash we used zinc oxide ointment and ivory soap.

diaper  
rash

Susan: I've been using zinc oxide on my hands, it really works well, with a little lotion in it.

Velma: If you want to take that, ?

Susan: Oh that's wonderful. It sounds, a lot of things sound very much like when I was in obstetrics which was in 1963 when I was in nursing school, it doesn't sound like it was a lot different. I think the changes started happening kind of late in the 60's. Let's just back up a little bit, tell me about when would a mother, what would she be told about when to she come to the hospital in labor, was there any perinatal education at all or did she just learn from her friends what to do?

Velma: No they had clinic and,

Susan: It was a prenatal clinic, I read about that in the paper.

Velma: Yes, and then they came in after the baby was born to this clinic.

Susan: Okay, the prenatal clinic, lets just back up on that was in the hospital?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And how often would a mother come to that, a pregnant woman come to the clinic. Do you have any idea.

Velma: I haven't any idea, you see the clinic was here.

Susan: Okay, I see.

prenatal  
care

Velma: And I think I was back there twice.

Susan: Okay, that wasn't something you did very much. Do you have any idea what they did in the clinic when the mothers came in?

Velma: No, I haven't any idea. I suppose the same as they do now days. Because, and they had Japanese...

Susan: Doctors?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And so they did medical care and do you think they gave much instruction, did the mothers act like they knew anything about birth when they came in?

*prenatal  
info.*

Velma: Not like they do now.

Susan: What would tell them, how would they know it was time to come in to the hospital, of course they didn't have to go too far.

Velma: No they didn't have to go too far. Well, I suppose their mothers and grandmothers and stuff like that.

Susan: Aunties, and those people, that was probably the main way they got information.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And so when they come into the hospital, they come into the emergency entrance?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And then once they got into the door can you kind of tell me the sequence of what would happen?

Velma: Well, we also prepped them, you know.

Susan: So they walk in, go back to the obstetric ward, and you would put them in bed?

Velma: We would put them in bed and admit them.

Susan: And you would shave them entirely and gave them an enema?

Velma: An enema, yes.

Susan: ....?

Velma: Oh yes, and then of course the doctor was called and he usually came in and examined them.

Susan: And then did he do a rectal exam also?

Velma: Yes. Of course we...

Susan: And you didn't use those little wooden...  
*Ate the scope?*

Velma: No.

Susan: Cause that was certainly common a lot of places. So you listen to the babies heart beat like how often?

Velma: Well, it kind of depended on how the heart beat was going. Usually about every three four...  
*?*

Susan: Okay, now would the mothers be up and moving around? or were they in bed?

Velma: They were moving around, in fact they were encouraged to walk.

Susan: They were?

Velma: Before the baby came.

Susan: That's interesting.

Velma: They used to walk by the hours.

Susan: No kidding. Would they walk by themselves or with somebody.

Velma: No, usually there was someone with them, and either...or a nurses aide.

Susan: Because that's different, certainly than what happened for many years. I wonder, because there is so much discussion now about how important it is to walk and be upright and wonder was that Japanese practices, doesn't sound like army practice.

Velma: No we did that at the county hospital.

Susan: Oh you did, in Billings. And so they would walk as long as they could walk?

Velma: As long as they could walk and when they got too uncomfortable well they were put to bed and,

Susan: Would they be moved into the delivery room before the delivery or...

Velma: No they were in the labor room, see we had two labor rooms.

Susan: And they were private...

Velma: Yes, they were private rooms.

*mouvement*

Susan: And who was with the mother in the labor room besides the nurses aide?

Velma: Well usually the RN that, of course the fathers weren't allowed.

Susan: Right, what kinds of things, now they were given medication, I remember mothers scapaulamy and what effects that had. Can you talk about what effects that usually had?

Velma: It usually made them quite excited. But they did give the morphine with it, I remember that.

Susan: Did you have to tie them down?

Velma: No we did in the emergency room, we had straps for their arms.

Susan: Oh, you mean in the delivery room?

Velma: In the delivery room, yes.

Susan: But in the labor room, because I can remember in nursing school the mothers having to be restrained with the scapaulamine because they were so out of control. I shouldn't even say out of control but they were almost hallucinating, they were having profound effects from that hallucigen.

Velma: I don't know why they give that, but it did excite the patient.

Susan: Well, that was given all over the country. So one of the claims that was always made for that was the mothers won't remember what happened to them. Do you think that was true or not.

Velma: I don't know.

Susan: You don't know. So when they got there would they be in very late labor?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: So for most of the labor, as long as they could be up they were?

Velma: They were up, when it got too uncomfortable why we put them to bed.

Susan: Did some of them go without scopolamine?

Velma: Yes some of them did, some of them didn't want it.

Susan: Were there other things that were done to make them comfortable?

Velma: No, I can't remember anything.

Susan: So then when you take the mother to the delivery room?

Velma: Well, usually when her pains were real close together...

Susan: Check that with a vaginal exam?

Velma: No, just rectal.

Susan: Excuse me, rectal exam. So you could go ahead and check. You must have gotten pretty good at that?

Velma: I don't know about that.

Susan: Were amniotomies done?

Velma: Oh no.

Susan: They didn't do those at all?

SKIP ??

Velma: No. We didn't have any incubators, you know, we used hot water bottles.

Susan: The membranes would apparently, must have been broken by the doctors in the delivery room.

Velma: Yes quite often if they didn't break, well he quite often did.

Susan: Okay tell me now when you took them into the delivery room what happened? What was the just like events?

Velma: Well, about the first thing, of course they break the sterile drapes and their feet put up in stirrups and usually by then the doctor was there.

Susan: So was that a high stirrup? Kind of a high stirrup?

Velma: Yes quite high.

Susan: Lithotomy position?

2ND stage

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And you saide that their arms were?

Velma: We had leather straps that we

Susan: What was that for?

Velma: Well, that was so they won't contaminate everything. Then we gave drip ether.

Susan: Did the nurses do that? That was your job?

Velma: Yes, we use that to keep them kinda..

Susan: Just under a little bit but they could still push.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And what position were they in on the delivery table?

Velma: They had their legs in the stirrups.

Susan: And they must have been laying absolutely flat.

Velma: Yes, absolutely flat.

Susan: The doctors were probably close enough around,

Velma: They usually stayed in the doctors quarters when they had an OB in the labor room.

Susan: You said~~d~~ the forceps were used sometimes, but you said~~d~~ not like they do now?

Velma: No.

Susan: You said~~d~~ most of the mothers had episiotomies?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And were those midline or were they mid-lateral?

Velma: Usually, lateral.

Susan: Ouch. When the baby was born what happened to the baby? Immediately at birth.

Velma: It just put into a crib that was right there in the delivery room.

Susan: What kind of things were done to the baby?

Velma: Well they usually were okay. They took the babies to the...

Susan: The babies would be taken from the delivery room right away?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: So the mother wouldn't hold the baby?

Velma: No not then.



Susan: So the baby would be taken to the nursery. Do you have any idea about, one of the questions many of us have wondered about, is how nurseries got started anyway. Why we had a separate room for babies that we took them to.

Velma: I don't have any idea, we always did except at the county hospital. We had a little nursery but...the babies were bathed every morning.

Susan: That was unusual at that time wasn't it?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And what about at Heart Mountain? Did the baby stay with the mothers?

Velma: Not all the time, part of the time they did.

Susan: What was the usual routine for babies?

Velma: Well, they were usually bathed in the morning and then taken out for the 10:00 feeding and then if the mother wanted to keep the baby for awhile...

Susan: How long, from the time the baby was born and went and got washed in the nursery and so forth, how long would it be before the mother would see the baby again?

Velma: Well, as soon as she got back to her room why we usually took the baby out to her.

Susan: Right away.

Velma: And the baby, of course, was...

Susan: Did the father get to come in or any family members to visit the mother and baby?

Velma: After the delivery room the father could come in.

Susan: Hold the baby?

Velma: He wasn't suppose to. !

Susan: Apparently it happened sometimes.

Velma: I think it did happen sometimes. I remember one time we had a delivery and the father and grandparents were standing out... baby. I should have said we had a baby boy.

Susan: Oh.

Velma: Instead of that I said we had a baby. They all laughed.

Susan: So they were in the hall, so they would go ahead, did they see the baby then?

Velma: They could come in and look through the nursery window.

Susan: But when the mothers had the babies that was when...

Velma: They weren't suppose to be in there.

Susan: That still happens. For a long time I wonder what we were worried about.

Velma: I don't know.

Susan: But that was the way it was when you were in nursing school too?

Velma: Oh yes. Now you can go in and the baby will be out you can visit.

Susan: So the babies went out, did they go out all night also? It sounds like it was pretty much a four hours schedule.

Velma: Yes it was on a four hour schedule.

Susan: And if the babies got hungry in between or cried what happened?

Velma: They were usually given water.

Susan: Oh water.

Velma: There was no pacifiers.

Susan: No pacifiers. Did the babies cry much?

Velma: I don't think they did, really. And we always laide the babies on their stomach, now they say not too. We did everything wrong.

Susan: You never know what's the right thing to do. So what kind of care did the mothers get while they were in the hospital?

Velma: Well, very good care. They had to stay in bed for ten days.

Susan: Ten days in bed?

Velma: Yes seven or eight to ten days. Of course they... and they had the heat lamp for the stitches...now they come home in 24 hours I think.

Susan: Right. What was the idea behind them staying in bed for so long.

Velma: I guess it was so everything would fall place. Won't fall out.



Susan: Did the mothers ever want to get up.

Velma: Well, I'm sure they did but we just didn't because that was what was expected, stay in bed...

Susan: Well, were they just dismissed then without ever getting up and walking?

Velma: Oh, they could walk around, usually the day before they went home.

Susan: By then they were probably pretty weak.

Velma: They were. That's right.

Susan: My mother, I was born in 1942 and I know my mother told me she stayed in bed a long time too. I think it was about a week. 5-7 days something like that. So then they went home and did they come back?

Velma: They came back to the clinic.

Susan: The mother and the baby?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And what was done there?

Velma: Well, they just postpartum care I guess because, see I didn't have anything to do with the clinic.

Susan: So you aren't sure.

Velma: They would check on them and the social worker had some aides to help her.

Susan: Do you remember very many babies dying?

Velma: Well, I don't remember any babies except one...the poor little thing...on duty they had a little...six months.

*preemie?*

Susan: Was he having breathing difficulty?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And that was the only one you remember?

Velma: That's the only one I remember.

Susan: That's amazing. You know because in your journal there were over 550 babies born and that was the only death that you

remember doing. And you were there all but about a year.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Or not even a year, maybe a half year. So the mother's must have been quite healthy?

Velma: I think they were.

Susan: I mean the infant mortality rate then which was out of all those babies born would be about a half percent. Well normally the mortality rate is figured is how many babies died per thousand. Live births. So your saying one baby died per 500 and some is very low.

not  
verified  
by  
hosp  
stats  
on IM

Velma: I'm sure it was because I don't just don't remember any, of course I wasn't on all three shifts, but I would have heard about it.

Susan: I'm sure you would have. Do you have any sense of baby, I know there may be some statistics and I am going to send for those, but babies dying in the first year of life. Did you hear about that happening very often.

Velma: No, we had quite a few come in...the ward.

Susan: It would have certainly happened in the hospital.

Velma: Yes, I'm sure it would.

Susan: It was a pretty healthy population, one reason I'm interested in that is because Japan has the lowest infant mortality rate in the world now and has for some time. I mean it's less than half of what they United States has and they have a, I think a lot of the reason has to do with the people being very healthy, they eat very well, they good care of themselves, everybody gets health care. There's a lot of reasons besides just the obstetric care. But it's very low and it's a bit of curiosity to me to know if you have so few babies die, I'm going to look at the rest of Wyoming and see what happened,

Velma: At that time?

Susan: Yes, I think I can at least get county rates. I can't get hospital rates, cause I have already checked into that but it would be interesting to know how that hospital compared in the outcome with the rest of Wyoming. And do you think people in some ways did have a more adequate food supply than say the rest of Wyoming?

Velma: Oh, they served good meals up there. I mean healthy meals. But they had better care because they could go to this...

Susan: I just think about having access to food. There was an editorial article in the Heart Mountain Centennial about a cartoon

that had been in the Denver newspaper indicating that the Japanese were being coddled at these camps and they were living better than the people outside. Was that a common perception?

Velma: I think it was, it's true. But you have to remember that the Japanese had to go out to the latrines and to the mess halls had no cooking facilities.

Susan: Yeah, I'm not questioning that myself, but apparently there was some resentment from people, was that Wyoming people, or Colorado people?

Velma: People all over. Especially California and along the west coast. They really hated the Japanese.

Susan: They did? That's interesting. You know I lived in California, I grew up there, in southern California, and I lived near Santa Ana, not very far but my parents are both still living, they are 86, and every time I ask my dad about this relocation he has very little recollection of the whole thing although they lived right there when it was happening, and said people didn't talk about it very much and he was an engineer and he there were some camps in California, and said he remembers going into the camps to do work on the boilers but he said people just didn't think too much about, it wasn't anything they remarked on. And that's the whole curiosity for me and then I remember when I started going to school in southern California they was some Japanese in my classes and I don't recall any particular feeling about them. So I don't know where that so of that feeling maybe in pockets of the west coast or I'm just kinda of curious.

Velma: Well, there was resentment, in Cody especially. It wasn't quite as bad here. (Powell)

Susan: You really remember it.

Velma: Yes, I remember it.

Susan: The resentment was about what?

Velma: Well, Pearl Harbor.

Susan: Oh, sure.

Velma: And a lot of them had their sons over there fighting against the Japanese. They shouldn't have been resentful of these because these were Americans.

Susan: How did you feel about working with Japanese?

Velma: I enjoyed it. And they were delightful people. Very courteous.

Susan: What were they like?

Velma: Very pleasant. There was only one Japanese RN that worked on Ward Six when I first went there, I felt that she resented being...four or five months after I started to go to work.

Susan: Caucasian nurses, the RNs were in charge of any of the Japanese nurses. They were under them.

Velma: Right. Just like the school teachers.

Susan: Okay, and the aides were also under your supervision?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: I see, so like in the nurses quarters did the Japanese RNs live with the caucasian RNs?

Velma: No, no just eh caucasian nurses lived in the nurses quarters.

Susan: I see, so the Japanese went back to their barracks. I wonder if that caused, did you have nicer quarters than they did?

Velma: Oh yes, I'm sure. Right after, well the first part of 1943...nice furniture for our...

Susan: Did you and the other nurses do for fun together? Did you socialize?

Velma: Oh yes. I had a car. Some of them didn't. And we would go into Ralston and ...

Susan: What kind of car did you have?

Velma: 1937 Willis.

Susan: That was kind of a nice car, wasn't it?

Velma: Yes and it was easy on gas.

Susan: Did you ever socialize with the Japanese nurses? Would you go out with them?

Velma: We had one party, I remember, there just wasn't any hardly.

Susan: To the picture show.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: One of the things I'm interested in, and I am certainly going to talk to the women at the reunion about this is just what it was like being an enemy. Being a woman and being seen as an enemy. I've seen a lot of propaganda materials toward the Japanese and other people, do you have any sense of that?

enemy

Velma: Well, one time they were having a meeting, the Japanese were having a meeting in the mess hall...there would be one caucasian there, why I don't know because it was all in Japanese, but I felt that day, I felt like I was kind of, you know...being there. ?

Susan: You just sit there.

Velma: I just sit there like a dummy.

Susan: How did you feel that resentment?

Velma: Well, I don't know I just did.

Susan: Sometimes it's more nonverbal than verbal.

Velma: They were always polite to me, there wasn't anything said or anything, but I just felt like I...

Susan: Well, Japanese, my experience, I spent time in Japan and the Japanese are invariably polite no matter what the circumstances. Do you have any recollections of particular mothers who had their babies. I know in my mind I have spent a lot time with women in labor, the labors that stand out for me, a special story?

Velma: No, I can't think of any?

Susan: Well maybe there maybe, I think at some point I would like to visit with you again and maybe somethings will pop up so do make a note of it. Did, was caesarean deliveries done very often.

Velma: Not very often.

Susan: What would be a reason for caesarean delivery?

Velma: Well, maybe a breech.

Susan: Would they deliver a breech vaginally if they could?

Velma: If they could, oh yes.

Susan: You are probably very good at doing this?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Not very often, I wonder, because now about one in four babies are born by caesarean and...

Velma: I don't think it's necessary but then.

Susan: No. Most of the countries, the western countries, including Japan, the rate is like 8-12%. But in this country we have kind of gotten off the deep end.

Velma: I think so too.

Susan: Would the women labor for several days sometimes. Do you remember what the average length of labor might be?

Velma: No.

Susan: Now days they use a lot of <sup>pit</sup>petosin to speed up the labor and then keep it. The reason I ask is because I do remember women being in labor for 2-3 days, sometimes, and they would use <sup>pit</sup>...petosin sometimes to keep their labors stimulated but it wasn't unusual to go home come back, to the same lady in labor.

Velma: Yes, I'm sure that was true too.

Susan: Did they use <sup>pitocin</sup>petosin ever? Do you remember that?

Velma: I don't remember the <sup>pitocin</sup>petosin, I know we used herb... ?

Susan: Okay. Was there anything that would be used to speed it up, I mean I've heard of castor oil, and all kinds of things that use to be used to start labor or to speed it up.

Velma: I remember the castor oil but I don't remember the <sup>pitocin</sup>petosin.

Susan: Well, it may not have been used at that point. Cause I'm talking about the sixties, and I don't know about the forties if they ever did that?

Velma: I can't remember that.

Susan: The hospital log book of the births.

Velma: Yes there was.

Susan: Where would it be?

Velma: I often wondered where the records of the...

Susan: I'm going to go to Washington to the national archives and wonder if somewhere in the war relocation the there are records, because that would be very interesting all of that could be...

Velma: Oh yes, I would even like to see that.

Susan: I bet you would. If I find it I'll let you know, and I don't know if I can photograph it but with only 550 some births it would be easy enough to get a copy of all that, and that would tell me all these questions, like the caesarean rates, and what might have been used, because I'm asking you to remember something that happened 50 years ago. That's pretty tough and, but you did have a record book that all that was kept,

Velma: Oh yes, it was, we kept track of our births.



Susan: That's what I'll have to find then, if I can. That detective job isn't?

Velma: I know we did ~~off~~<sup>at</sup> the county hospital too.

Susan: Sure, everybody has. So it has to be somewhere, it's just a matter of...

Velma: I wonder if any of it went to Cheyenne?

Susan: Probably that kind of record won't go to Cheyenne. Cheyenne didn't have, I've already check about Heart Mountain and they don't have material. They have it for Park County, but they won't have it for the hospital.

Velma: Oh, probably not.

Susan: And so in the delivery book, probably wouldn't be any record from Heart Mountain. So that's what I am going to have to try and find out because that will have everything in it.

Velma: Yes, I'm sure it would.

Susan: It would be fun to know that. I know there ~~is~~<sup>are</sup> probably 2000 stories.

Velma: Well, you know it would be right to say that I didn't even think about Heart Mountain there, but so what, we past it when we went to the Park...

Susan: And more or less forgot about it.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: What brought it up ten years ago then?

Velma: Well, people began to be more interested in it. You know like this article that you...gave you. The Japanese younger people started talking about here.

Susan: Years ago.

Velma: And I won't have written my book, I would have just thought oh heck, but our two daughters started you better write that down, mom you do this, mom you do that. So finally I started putting things together.

Susan: It's a very nice book.

Velma: Well thank you.

Susan: I really enjoyed reading it. You saide to me, I think on the phone, that you didn't know where the other nurses were, the other caucasian or Japanese or nurses.

Velma: I know this one girl is in South Africa...

Susan: South Africa? She lives there.

Velma: She went there as a missionary, she married a missionary. One girl is a missionary in India.

Susan: Who is the nurse that lives in South Africa?

Velma: Ruth Loovs.

Susan: How do you spell her last name?

Velma: Loovs.

Susan: And she is still there, I may be in South Africa next year.

Velma: Gee you get around.

Susan: If I am there, what city is she in?

tape blank.

Susan: The nurse in Wisconsin what is her name? She is still alive.

Velma: Yes, Rebecca, now that's another thing I can look up for.

Susan: Okay, that's fine.

Velma: Grimstead. And she is living in the same town that couple from our church was from and they know her.

Susan: Okay, do you know what town that is in Wisconsin?

Velma: No I don't but sure find out for you.

Susan: Okay, you can check that later. Cause she would be, I mean there is two possibilities to get a little more information. And as far as you know those are the only two of the nurses left?

Velma: Only the two nurses that I know are living. We had one come here several, while probably about 1960 and visited with me.

Susan: You might even be able to call the woman in Wisconsin and talk with her and I might be able to write to the woman in Africa even if I don't get there.

Velma: Well, give me your address.

Susan: Oh, it's right on my check. That's my home address.

Velma: Okay, and then when I found out these addresses I'll send them to you.

Susan: That's great, now I wanted to ask you one other thing before we go and that is about the infant feeding center, I wasn't quite sure what that was all about because the paper said<sup>d</sup> the infants were two years of age and what was that?

Velma: The formula kitchen was in Ward Eight and they made all the formula for the newborns but now they could have out in the center, they might have in the mess halls, had special areas for the newborns.

Susan: Why did they prepare all the formula there? Were they not able to do that in the barracks.

Velma: Well, see there was no refrigeration in the barracks.

Susan: I see, so everything had to be fresh and totally used. There was an article in the paper that was very interesting that complaining about mothers who were not washing the bottles and nipples before bringing them back and were leaving crud in it and was basically telling the mothers they should be more thoughtful. Do you remember that at all. Apparently they had to return the equipment.

Velma: They had to return the bottles and then they were boiled.

Susan: But anyway they were not grasping about that in the paper that,

Velma: I didn't see that article.

Susan: Oh well you know, I'm looking at, I am going to have to go through the papers, sometimes they are hidden, like the be under musing.

Velma: Musing column, yes.

Susan: And just some kind of funny things that don't have headlines about the hospital but that was one of them it was just kind of well the mothers ought to be more thoughtful, you know there is crud in the bottles and nipples and,

Velma: Well you know that's true but they didn't have running water in the barracks. They had to take them to the latrines and laundry facilities to wash the bottles.

Susan: That would be awfully hard and probably the water wasn't hot there anyway was it?

Velma: Well I'm sure they had hot water.

Susan: But they would have to go from their barracks to the latrines, wash it out and then get it back to the hospital.

Velma: And they had to wash out the diapers, you know they just

had great big sinks to do their laundry in.

- Susan: And then they would hang up the diapers in their barracks.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Boy it must have been tough having baby.

Velma: Well, I'm sure it was, especially when there was, say a whole family four or five people living in one room you know.

Susan: I'm surprised virtually all the mothers didn't breast feed given how hard it would be to deal with bottles. Even though it was fixed for them.

Velma: Well I'm sure they did if they could. Because that was in thing then.

Susan: To breast feed?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Oh it was? In the mid '40s?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: My mother breast fed me but I always had the impression that maybe that wasn't so common. I know when I breast feed my children it was very unusual and that was in the late '60s early '70s.

Velma: Well I tried to feed both of my <sup>one</sup> but I just didn't have any milk. But I fed Jarrel on this...all the time.?

Susan: That was the thing to do wasn't, I mean that was the way, I remember making formula in nursing school for all that, mix all the carnation milk and tablespoon of karo and...

Velma: Yeah, that's what we did.

Susan: I'll stop this.

Susan: Ward Eight was the mental ward and the article in the paper was talking about women who were there. They were middle aged women they said that were really looking like they were filled with despair, go ahead tell me about that.

Velma: Well, they came in....that's right and some of them could cope and some of them...

Susan: ...they had to so they had left their homes and lives and here they were but the paper, there were very few articles like that that got into the paper, it's almost like they had to be stuck in somewhere. The paper seemed to try and be positive and upbeat

*on site at Head  
MTI.*

and patriotic and.

- Velma: I think they did, yes.

Susan: Not talk about how bad it was. Do recall that at all, about the general attitude?

Velma: Well I think the general attitude was...and they seemed...?

Susan: Was it back then? It was a house?

*skip*

Velma: It use to be a little motel and there is a...

Susan: What was the Heart Mountain, you saide the Heart Mountain Canal and they hired the evacuees to work on it and what was the Canal?

Velma: Well it was to put water on...that was when the...

Susan: Was the Canal back there?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: That's a big canal.

*all in the car!*

Velma: Yes, you bet.

Susan: Probably didn't get paid a lot of money for that, am I going to be turning here?

Velma: Yes, right here.

Susan: Right here is where the people came in.

Velma: Yes, right here is where the people...the army camp.

Susan: The army camp. And what was, were the army people lived?

Velma: Yes, that were the guards for all the guard towers.

Susan: So there were 122 soldiers here?

*soldiers*

Velma: Yes, with three officers. And they maintained the patrol and the guard towers around the camp. See the camp was all enclosed in barbed wire. And the depot was over on this side and it was called location. The railroad never did recognize Heart Mountain, it was always Location. And the motor pool was right down there and that cellar was for potatoes, see the Japanese raised an awful lot of their own food. And they stored...

Susan: When that picture of you down at the station during the physical exams you were right here?

Velma: Yes, there was a barracks along here, we were right along

here.

- Susan: I'll be darn. And this came right from, where does this check come from? The west coast?

*Track*

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Of course, Utah and...

Velma: Utah and up through Wyoming and then it was brought up here.

Susan: So these trains that came were specifically to come Heart Mountain and drop people off and then they went back to the west coast?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: That must have been something seeing all these people come in. What was that like for you to see so many people be, you know coming in?

Velma: I only helped with the train that came in and there was over 1,000 people on that train and we check every, I think there was three doctors and...

Susan: They must have been so sacred.

Velma: I bet they were.

Susan: Have you seen Shindler's List.

Velma: No, not yet, but I would sure like too.

Susan: I notice it is playing in Powell but it's interesting because when the Jews were taken to the Nazi camps, the concentration camps that was the first thing that happened too when they got off the train is that they were physically checked but then they were often earmarked for death, the death chambers or else they might be put into a work detail...

Velma: Or use them for experiments.

Susan: Yes, and of course this didn't operate at the same level of intensity but in some ways people were displaced in a very similar way.

Velma: Sure you bet they were. There was no family life because when they went into mess hall to eat the kids wanted to eat with other kids so the family...

Susan: That's not the Japanese way at all is it? Being they are private and there was no privacy.

Velma: For the camp...

Susan: What stopped here.

Velma: The gate for the soldier was...

Susan: Okay we are just passing the ... now so there is a gate here.

Velma: Yes, and then guard tower, there was one right over there and one back over this way, that kind of went up this way with the guard towers and around the camp.

Susan: Does it seem funny to look at it now, obviously you can just see it the way it was.

Velma: Yes, I can sure, like the hospital it just seems like it was yesterday.

Susan: Sure. That's very impressionable time and you know you being a new nurse at that time and all the chaos of the war years is quite an experience to have.

Okay so we are right by the monument and looking toward Heart Mountain and that's all farm land it looks like.

Velma: Yes, all of this has been put into farmland and divided up to homesteads.

Susan: I see.

Velma: See the veterans coming home from the war had first choice on getting a homestead. And they bought as many barracks as they needed \$1 a piece.

Susan: And they lived in the barracks?

Velma: They lived in the barracks until they could afford to rebuild or improve the barracks, there was no running water, no electricity out here for the homesteaders.

Susan: What a life.

Velma: We applied but you had to have \$1,000 down and we didn't have that and then John got involved in recapping tires so we didn't do anything with the...

Susan: That would have been a different life for you wouldn't it have?

Velma: Yes, it sure would have.

Susan: You know it's such beautiful land and yet you read about it and it talks about how desolate for these people and I look at it

and but I have lived in Wyoming a long time, I think it's just gorgeous. I'm sure coming from California and beautiful homes it didn't hold the same appeal.

So who constructed this monument?

Velma: Well, the Ralston club had a lot to do with it and the ones that started it was Mr. and Mrs. Chester Blackburn and then of course, the Historical National Register has kind of taken over and they have added quite a few things to it.

Susan: Was there something right here in particular?

Velma: This was the administration offices on this side of the road and they had the administration offices consisted of two barracks and then they had their mess hall, recreation hall...as a police station and the fire hall.

Susan: Is that hospital?

Velma: That the hospital, we'll drive over there.

Susan: We're going to go over there. Okay I'll wait, I'll take a picture of you in front of the hospital. Well, that's interesting that that's still up when there is nothing else really here.

Velma: I don't understand how it managed to survive, they had three or four barracks around in this area for administration personnel. But they weren't built for probably the later part of 1943.

Susan: Now there are no barracks, was this from the barracks?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: It was? It looks like a house now?

Velma: Yes it was a barracks but they used it for the personnel living quarters. And someone lived in that until quite recently.

Susan: Well, let's look at the rest of the...and this from the book I have by Esther Essugar. Have you seen that book?

Velma: Yes, I have it. I knew here.

Susan: Oh you did?

Velma: She use to come into the ambulance room quite often and she was a beautiful lady about your size and long golden hair and she looked so out of place you know with being a blonde but I think maybe her husband worked as an ambulance driver or something.

Susan: So you got to know her.



Velma: But you know we didn't carry on too long a conversation, it was more less how are you doing and how are you and it was like that.

Susan: She felt being one of the few caucasian people among all the Japanese. Her drawings are wonderful though.

Velma: Oh they are.

Susan: Let me take a picture of you in front of this, the sun is not quite right but I'll still do it. I've got Heart Mountain in the background.

Velma: Now you stand there and I'll get a picture of you. 😊

Susan: I'll get a little closer here, I don't know if I'll be able to read it or not. It's a nice plaque. Very amazing. It's a war memorial, what mixed feelings they must have had. There were 120,000 persons around the country. Do you know how many camps there were?

Velma: There was ten of them.

Susan: Ten around the country. And in those ten camps there were 120,000 people.

110,600

Velma: See this is the hospital and here was the doctors quarters, the nurses quarters, and so on.

Susan: It really was large, a little bit set aside from all the living units so people had to walk a little bit didn't they to get there and the women that might have been a pretty good walk.

Velma: Well, it was. Of course, it was just gravel streets, it wasn't paved like we know now.

Susan: I'm going to go over there and take a picture of it without the fence in it. It's a great day for pictures. Smells like farmland. It's wonderful land. You know what's interesting when I have told people about what I'm doing they say nobody has ever written about the hospital. It's kind of interesting because it seems like with such a big elegant hospital it seems like a logical thing and I actually didn't start out to write about the hospital but obviously a little bit of that is going to fit in there.

Velma: Now just go up that dirt road.

Susan: Okay, I got the feeling from the paper that people were very proud of the hospital.

Velma: We were and we wore our white uniforms and caps and the girls had their pinafore dresses on we did take pride in it.

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Susan: And the, how about the Japanese were they proud of the hospital.

Velma: I think they were.

Susan: It must have been reassuring in the midst of despair that they could get such great care here.

Velma: They got good care. Go right around here.

Susan: Here we are at the hospital and it looks like we've got a little bit of fencing around it.

Velma: I think this was the hospital mess hall, and the rest of it was see came out this way.

Susan: Oh, you mean the whole hospital's here.

Velma: No, just this one barracks and the furnace and we can just stop here.

Susan: Okay.

Velma: And the chimney.

Susan: And the chimney that heated the hospital. So it was much bigger than this.

Velma: Oh yes, it extend out here the hallway, that long hallway was about a block long. Cause you see each 12 barracks there was going up.

Susan: It saide 17.

Velma: That's right 17 barracks.

Susan: Well you must have walked a lot.

Velma: We walked, you bet we walked.

Susan: It doesn't seem like maybe a very efficient or was it?

Velma: It had to be that way, see it was built on army standards and it had to be that way to meet the army code, the fire code. See all of this was wooden structures and if one had caught on fire they could have separated it you know.

Susan: Well, I did see in the paper and I've heard this that there were a lot of fires in barracks, so this was constructed so fire was less of a hazard. I wonder why they used that kind of construction.

Velma: Well, it was the only thing that was available during the war.

Susan: Probably quick too. It looks like there is some kind of tar paper on it now. On the outside. This is what..

Velma: This is farmland now so...

Susan: So there is lots of rattlesnakes. <sup>Was</sup> there rattlesnakes, do you remember them during the Heart Mountain days.

Velma: No I don't think so because there had been too much activity up here you know in the building and all. Now all of this was the barracks. The town laide out that way and the same cemetery was the foot of that hill over there but most of the Japanese had their relatives cremated.

Susan: They did? And kept the ashes?

Velma: Yes there was very few put in the cemetery.

Susan: Is the cemetery still there?

Velma: I don't know whether it is or not. And the school building, they built a beautiful school building. It was down off in here.

Susan: And that took a little while to get constructed.

Velma: Yes, they had it in September, 1943, they had a wonderful home ec. department with new sewing machines and new stoves and.

*School*

Susan: I was interested, in the paper every once in a while they would have tips on how to make the barracks homey with little architectural decorating ideas, and I thought boy I wonder how they really can do that?

Velma: The main hall came right straight out from that chimney and came out this way and then the barracks where on each side of the hallway. Connected with a short hall to connect with the long hall.

Susan: And this was, you thought, the mess hall.

Velma: Yes, we can go in there, we'll go around.

Susan: This is the warehouse, okay, where the foundations are now.

Velma: And then another warehouse there.

Susan: For the hospital. That's all part of the one side of the long hall you were talking about.

Velma: Yes. It's in the planning. They would like to make, have a small museum up here and a walk way, you know a walk path so that people could just stay on the path and look at the building.

Susan: There are several different people from what I hear. Right where the chimney is is the laundry.

Velma: Well, that was the furnace, the steam heat for the hospital. And the laundry was out there too for the hospital. They did all the nurses uniforms and of course the sheets and that.

Susan: So that was end of the hospital. Boy that really gives me a sense of how big it was.

Velma: Yes, and it went clear up you know way up there. About 1,000 feet.

Susan: It seems like a some staircases would have made for some efficiency. You had plenty of room but it's spread out, there is no doubt about that. Most of it, has it been taken down or just fallen down?

Velma: A lot of the barracks have been sold to the homesteaders.

Susan: Okay they just physically took the buildings maybe, would they move them or would they live in them right here.

Velma: Oh no, they moved them up to their homesteads.

Susan: I see okay.

Velma: There is a guard tower over here on that hill. And of course we could see the lights, the search lights all night long.

Susan: The light went round and round?

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Was that the only one or?

Velma: No every guard tower had a search light. You know they thought the...

Susan: What did they every find?

Velma: Well nothing.

Susan: Where would you go and who would come here.

Velma: You probably heard about the incident about the Congressman from the state of Hawaii.

Susan: Go ahead and tell me, I don't think I have.

Velma: Well he was 12 years old and a group of boys was playing close to the barbed wire fence and their ball ran under the fence. Well, immediately the guard called the headquarters to report it to his commanding officer and two officers arrived in a jeep and they

took the little boy down to the headquarters and kept him for a couple of hours before they would release him to his parents and now he is a Congressman from the state of Hawaii.

Susan: No kidding. What is his name, do you know?

Velma: Starts with an I.

Susan: I think they made a big deal out of something that...

Velma: Yes.

Susan: Has he been one of the congressmen that has been advocating for a, you know?

Velma: I suppose he has been.

Susan: For the demands of the Japanese.

Velma: That was alright, if they had done it 30 years ago when the older people were here at the camp, but they had all died off, a lot of them.

Susan: Too little, too late.

Velma: Yes. The hall came out this door.

Susan: Okay, right to the right of the chimney.

Velma: Yes and it went straight out there.

Susan: It looks like the construction was simply wood and then that tar paper and that was it?

Velma: That was it.

Susan: And there was no insulation. You saying before my tape ran out that it got really hot in the summer and then it was really cold in the winter. Is that?

Velma: Especially this long hall. There was no heat in the long hall. And it had windows like that every few feet and in the winter time we would have to wear a sweater making our rounds and in the summer you would just die and then the wind blew there was dust all over everything.

Susan: The wind must blow a lot out here.

Velma: Oh yes it does.

Susan: Today it's perfect, but probably not typical. And so this valley gets, a basin as it's called, gets very hot in the summer?

Velma: Yes. Last summer it didn't it was quite cool last summer

but there would be days it would be up to 98 and 100.

Susan: Wow, that is hot.

Velma: It is hot especially when you are in a barracks like that you know and no air conditioning.

Susan: You think it is a little easier when your young?

Velma: Yes I do.

Susan: Probably not the job you would pick right now?

Velma: No, I couldn't do it now. Over there there's a barracks, see where that red pick-up is?

Susan: Yes.

Velma: Well then that's a barracks that that farmer moved there. See he's probably using it for a shed.

Susan: It looks like it's all wood.

Velma: Yes they were all wooden.

Susan: But he doesn't even seem to have the tar paper like this does.

Velma: No he has probably put stuff on it.

Susan: I see.

Velma: There's a creaking door.

Susan: Look the sign says, "my father died here." Somebody wrote that on in chalk.

Velma: I had been working on Ward Nine and had spilt potassium permagimate all over my uniform and instead of walking clear back to the nurses quarters I came out here and got one of my uniforms that had just been iron.

Susan: Left it here, you must have been a mess.

Velma: I was a mess and the sad part about it it didn't come out of the uniform.

Susan: Did you have to buy your own uniforms?

Velma: Yes, but they did the laundry, and you know that was a whole lot because every uniform had to be ironed. We didn't have any...

Susan: And it was starched I bet.

Velma: Oh yes. In, I think in the Capper's Farmer, there was an article and they wanted historical buildings and I sent in a picture of this but I haven't heard anything.

Susan: The administration building was right?

Velma: Right over here.

Susan: Right over there, it was close to one of the barracks where you thought this was a mess hall didn't you.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And so you would walk over to the administration barracks and do what?

Velma: To eat, if we were off duty we usually ate over at the administration.

Susan: So you could meet other people, you said.

Velma: Yes.

Susan: And then you came back here and slept. I could see why you would probably want to take off when you had time off and go to Powell or somewhere else. Couldn't have been a whole lot to do here.

Velma: No there wasn't, that's true.

Susan: How were you so lucky as to have a car?

Velma: Well, when I worked out at the county hospital in Billings we were about five miles out of town and I just wanted a car so John went with me and helped me pick out a car and I bought it.

Susan: Good for you, you were an independent women for those days weren't you? You know there can't have been that many women who went out and bought a car.

Velma: Well, I don't know I just figured I needed a car.

Susan: You did, but I bet not very many women did that, back in the mid '40s.