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“Wake up! Japan has Bombed Pearl Harbor”

“Who? Where?”

Half asleep from night duty at the Baroness Erlanger Hospital School of Nursing in Chattanooga, Tennessee, my response to my roommates announcement is understandable. Perhaps less understandable may be my enlisting as a nurse in the Army Air Corp. (and) going from the hills of Appalachia to the 38th Parallel dividing North and South Korea may be far fetched. Such was WWII. Twenty nine graduates from my class of thirty three volunteered. We are from the Volunteer State.

I was born in Tennessee and grew up in South Korea. No complaints, Lord.

From the early morning exercise, with the troops, of course, in Denver, Colorado, I was sent to Keesler Field, Mississippi where again I exercised with the troops but with more warmth. Proving myself physically fit then transferred to nurses' Hight Training at Randolph Field, Texas was inevitable. More early morning calisthenics!

The sunsets at Pearl Harbor were breathtaking- not far away but right at one's hand like mountain fog back home. Here, I met, became engaged and later married a Navy doctor. We cried over Pearl. So much destruction, such waste, such a crime!

Clark Field and Fort McKinley taught me compassion as I saw Manila's burned out buildings and learned to feel empathy for the islands' people. Yes, Gen. McArthur you must return. It's not fair. It's not humane. It's horrible.

What with my two brothers now enlisted in the Navy (My mother's three stars in her window) I felt kinship with each and every soldier, sailor, or marine. We were of the American Family. Speech became handshakes and hugs: “Thank You” and “pleas were heard in the land. The Wild Blue Yonder was examined- the planes, the troops, the elements, the world.

Tokyo was beginning occupation so quite reigned: the bombs and “The” bomb aad evened the playing field. Pearl Harbor could rest now perhaps. I tried to learn Japanese language- too complex and the teachers too few.

Nagasaki became a lesson disturbing as I viewed the site from aircraft,- Why Father, do men play war? The commanding general was saying “forgive, rise agove, extend a hand” Please?

Korea brought pain, hunger, hurt, no food for the troops – “It's last on the supply Line.” We four nurses huddled in army blankets to keep warm as we lay on cold barrack's floors. We ate shoots of unnamed vegetables, greens from Korean farmers' gardens as we prayed for the troops who had less. (A soldier may have been given a loaf of bread to last 8 days.) Mental health took a nose dive. Without medicines, without foodstuffs, without warmth, without fraternization with the Koreans we were a defeated conquerors. The airplanes needed parts, needed pilots, needed maintenance, needed help. This was not the Promised Land.

Being a “preachers kid”, I worked as a good missionary doing my bit of extended comfort to the native children and their families. Most memorable moments came when I awakened on Easter morning to hear Korean children singing “Christ Arose” in my native language. I knew I would survive. God is good.

Taps

Day is done, gone the sun
From the lake, from the hill,
From the sky.
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.

Thanks and praise for our days
‘neath the sun, ‘neath the stars,
‘neath the sky.
As we go, this we know. God is nigh.