

Army Nurse Corps



COL. FLORENCE A. BLANCHFIELD,
Supt., Army Nurse Corps.

WHEREVER America's fighting men went, from frigid Alaska to tropical Burma, and from the nightmare beachhead at Anzio to Germany, members of the Army Nurse Corps took their healing skills, sometimes even at the cost of their own lives. At the close of the war, the Corps, 55,000 strong, distinguished itself as a gallant part of the nation's military organization, winning praise as an integral factor in the high standard of health among soldiers of the Army and in the gratifying percentage of recovery of casualties.

The Army Nurse during the recent war was at work in every quarter of the globe, serving on land, on the sea in hospital ships and in the air, evacuating the wounded by plane. Because of the rugged conditions under which she frequently served, she was trained to use foxholes and to understand gas defense, to purify water in the field and to crawl, heavily equipped, under barbed wire. That training was often necessary, because the Florence Nightingales of this war served in actual combat zones.

Several, in fact, gave their lives in the line of duty. Six nurses were killed in the bombing of a hospital on the Anzio beachhead. An Army hospital ship, the first of six similar vessels, has been named after one of these heroic women, Lieut. Blanche F. Sigman. An Army general hospital in Chicago has been named for the first

Below: Blood plasma is administered to a wounded fighter at a general hospital in France. Army Nurses were on duty only a few hours after Yanks landed.



nurse to meet her death in a theater of operations in the recent war, 2nd Lieut. Ruth M. Gardiner, killed in a plane crash in Alaska while serving as an air evacuation nurse. Approximately sixty Purple Hearts were given to members of the Corps for wounds received in action.

Decorations meted out to the gallant nurses included one Distinguished Service Medal, presented to Col. Florence A. Blanchfield, Superintendent of the ANC, who was responsible for its expansion from peacetime's few hundred to more than 50,000; two Distinguished Flying Crosses; five Soldier's Medals; 12 Legion of Merit Medals; five Silver Stars; 579 Bronze Stars; 393 Air Medals; and 103 citations or commendations.

Among those receiving the Silver Star were three members of the ANC who were cited for their coolness and efficiency during a concentrated shelling of a field hospital area during action on the Fifth Army's Anzio-Nettuno beachhead. Despite the fact that several nurses were killed and many other military personnel wounded, they went right on with their work of mercy. Power lines were cut and the doctors and nurses treated and evacuated the wounded by flashlight.

Even when danger from the enemy was not acute in itself, Army Nurses frequently suffered privations and hardships in order to bring comfort to the fighting forces. They lived in tents in the midst of winter, they washed and did their laundry in helmets, they struggled with tropic jungles. Through it all, they kept smiling, fully realizing the fact that their very presence provided a lift in the morale of the wounded that often was as important as plasma.

In addition to the medical care which mem-



Above: Army Nurses took to the air on missions of mercy. A flight nurse cares for a patient being evacuated by plane from fighting front to modern hospital.

bers of the ANC gave to American fighting men, their service extended to the thousands of tragically displaced persons who were forced to leave their homes in Europe. Many suffered from tuberculosis, malnutrition, anemia and other disabilities and Army nurses used their skills to help in handling that public health problem.

Not all nurses served overseas. Thousands were stationed at huge Army hospitals at home, caring for men who were wounded or ill.

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